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Marx's Theory of Social Classes in Capitalist Society:
Toward an Interpretation.

by
Nixon Apple
49778

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of
Graduate Studies in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
Department of Political Science
Carleton University
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The undersigned recommend to the Faculty of
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Toward an Interpretation."

submitted by William Nixon Apple, B.A.,
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
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Spring 1978

This thesis provides a thematic-developmental interpretation of Karl Marx's theory of social classes in capitalist society. By discussing the ideological, political and economic dimensions of Marx's theory during three specific time periods (1842-44, 1844-52, and 1852-75), and by investigating the nature of the changes that his theory underwent, this paper explains the various linkages that Marx formulated between his theory of social classes and his theory of the capitalist mode of production.

Although a variety of interpretive critiques have been developed in relation to this aspect of Marx's work, they have generally been inadequate for two reasons. On the one hand, they have not assessed Marx's theory in terms of the changes that occurred and why these changes occurred in his earlier and later writings. On the other hand, they have failed to distinguish the different levels of analysis and abstraction that Marx utilized in formulating his theory of social classes in capitalist society.

By focusing specifically on both the development of his work and the levels of analysis and abstraction that he utilized, this paper demonstrates why Marx understood social class as a historical relationship involving the lives of real men and women, which can only be conceptualized in terms of social relational categories that embody the capacity to explain the making and remaking of social structure and not its completion.

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Introduction

It is the expressed purpose of this thesis to provide an interpretation of Karl Marx's theory of classes in capitalist society. In undertaking this task, we are only indirectly concerned with the more general theory of classes that Marx developed within his materialist conception of history, which included both the role and nature of classes in capitalist and pre-capitalist social formations. In distinguishing between his general theory of classes and the theory of classes in capitalist society, Marx often used the term "social classes" to denote the forms of class formation and class conflict that obtained within social formations, marked by the presence of what Marx called "the capitalist mode of production". We shall follow Marx in this usage, and throughout the course of this thesis, Marx's theory of classes in capitalist society will be referred to as Marx's theory of social classes.

We emphasize that this thesis is primarily an interpretation rather than a critique. Although there exists a vast array of interpretive critiques that focus directly or indirectly on Marx's theory of social classes, these critiques all too often take for granted what must in the first instance be explained and demonstrated: namely, the complex relationships that obtain between Marx's theory of the capitalist mode of production and his theory of social classes. We will argue that Marx's theory of social classes cannot be

understood unless the relationship between social classes and the capitalist mode of production is rigorously investigated and specified.

Furthermore, we will argue that for Marx social classes cannot be regarded as simply a series of quantifiable concepts, nor can the relationships within and between classes be understood outside of the context of historical development. Marx always understood social class as both a theoretical construct for studying reality and a lived and experienced dimension of that reality. This we will demonstrate by showing that for Marx social class is a historical relationship involving the lives of real men and women, which can only be conceptualized in terms of social relational categories that embody the capacity to explain the making and remaking of social structure and not its completion.¹

In terms of our mode of presentation, one must bear in mind that Marx's theory of social classes is incomplete in that the third volume of Capital, the work that represents Marx's most extensive theoretical discourse on the specific nature and developmental tendencies of the capitalist mode of production, ends abruptly at that very point where Marx began his chapter devoted to the nature of classes in capitalist society. It is primarily this fact which raises the all important problem concerning the question of interpretive method.

In this thesis, I have used what might be termed a combined thematic/developmental method of interpretation as opposed to the

¹For a similar specification of the concept of social class, see E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class, (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1968), pp.9-15. Also, A. Swingewood, Marx and Modern Social Theory, (London: Macmillan Ltd., 1975), pp.12-13.

more popular thematic/synthetic approach. The thematic/synthetic method of interpretation, utilized by such contemporary theoreticians as Ralf Dahrendorf and Anthony Giddens², is primarily concerned with presenting and elucidating a variety of specific themes or categories that Marx utilized (ie., class conflict, class formation, surplus value, alienation, etc.) and showing how these various categories constitute the component parts of the conceptual apparatus that Marx developed in his analysis of social classes. In order to do this, textual analysis and logical inference are utilized and applied to all of Marx's work spanning the period from 1840-1883 to demonstrate both the implicit and explicit meanings that can be derived from Marx's work. Because of the unfinished nature of Marx's work, this approach utilizes the method of abstraction where the economic, ideological and political dimensions of Marx's theory are derived or extracted from the different texts and the different time periods during which he wrote and are then moulded together so as to facilitate a logical and comprehensive overview of what is involved in Marx's theory of social classes.

The thematic/developmental approach that we have utilized is similar to this mode of interpretation in that we are concerned with extracting those implicit and explicit themes and categories that make up the economic, ideological and political dimensions of Marx's theory. We have also utilized the method of abstraction to take into account the unfinished nature of Marx's work and also to assist in overcoming the conceptual ambiguity that sometimes accompanies Marx's usage of the concept class and its attendant terminology. However, what distinguishes our approach from the thematic/synthetic method is the question of theoretical and

²R. Dahrendorf, Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975) and A. Giddens, The Class Structure of the Advanced Societies, (London: Hutchinson & Co. Ltd., 1974).

historical periodization. While the approach of Dahrendorf, Giddens and other writers draws freely from all of Marx's works, thus integrating both his earlier and later writings, we feel that it is necessary that Marx's theory be treated in terms of three specific time periods representing various phases of the development of his work.

We would suggest that this is necessary because the development of theory, much the same as history, can only be fully understood in terms of its internal development. This of course does not preclude or negate the importance of the impact of the work of Marx's contemporaries on his own writings, or the changes in the historical evolution of capitalism that exercised such a profound impact upon the development of his work. But it does suggest that certain fundamental questions such as the impact of Hegel's work on the earlier and later writings of Marx, or the consequences of the development of Marx's theory of surplus value, can only be understood and incorporated into his theory of social classes if his work is divided and analyzed in terms of several stages of development. By utilizing such an approach, the transition in Marx's work from one stage to another can be specified both in terms of innovations and alterations that his theory underwent, why these innovations and alterations occurred in the manner that they did, and with what consequences for his theory of social classes.

Accordingly, this presentation is divided into three chapters representing three particular time periods or stages of Marx's theoretical development. In the first chapter, we will be primarily concerned with how Marx's theory of social classes developed

through his critique of Hegel during the 1842-44 period. In the second chapter we will focus on the conceptual apparatus that Marx developed during the 1844-52 period, and how it was influenced by Hegel's work and by Marx's own materialist conception of history. And, finally, the third chapter will focus on Marx's work during the 1852-75 period where he laid the foundation for his scientific theory of the capitalist mode of production itself. The last section of this third chapter will also serve as a conclusion that integrates and assesses the various changes that Marx's theory of social classes underwent and why these changes took the form they did.

In undertaking such a project there are several difficulties which arise that must be accounted for. One of the problems that the thematic/developmental approach encounters concerns the ability to provide a synthesis or overview of Marx's entire theoretical project considered as a totality. When one is dealing with innovations and alterations that take place over several different time periods, there are often a number of loose ends that have not been brought together, or as in Marx's own writings, there exist certain important conceptions developed during one period that are not mentioned in the next period or are only implicit in nature. This all too often results in the interpretation being incomplete or lacking the internal cohesiveness that can and should be provided by a general synthesis that attempts to present the theory under investigation as a unity, as a totality, without in the process glossing over the many problems or internal contradictions that exist.

For this reason we have included a fourth chapter which very briefly attempts to provide what might be termed an inverted

thematic/synthetic summation that presents a schematic outline of what Marx's theory of social classes suggests in terms of a general theoretical model for the study of social classes and how this model can and should be utilized for empirical work. One writer has described such an undertaking in the following terms:

"In order to restore the unity of the concept of classes in Marx we have to follow his work in inverted order. We have to begin with Capital to give the context in which the concept appears in Marx's thought, and then go from this starting point to the earlier works in which the concept appears on a concrete level."³

Thus, by taking Capital as the theoretical foundation of Marx's work, we can then reassess some of the themes and categories that Marx dealt with more extensively in his earlier writings (particularly some of his concepts involving politics and class) and show how the earlier and later writings might be integrated for the purposes of specifying what Marx's work suggests in terms of a general theory of social classes. We feel that such a project is not only valid but necessary. For theoretical interpretation not only involves what was really said and meant, but also and perhaps more importantly it involves an assessment of the possible meaning or meanings that are logically consistent with the theory and that therefore can be included or logically extended in the process of presenting a synthesis through theoretical abstraction.

There are of course other problems that arise from such an undertaking, although I would suggest that these difficulties are more related to my own personal limitations rather than to the method of interpretation that I have employed. To begin with, there is the language problem that I have had to deal with. The only

³T.DosSantos, "The Concept of Social Classes", Science and Society, (Vol.34, #2, 1970), p.170.

complete edition of all the works of Marx and Engels, which covers forty-one separate volumes, is the 1968 East German edition entitled Marx-Engels Werke. Although a good deal of these writings are available in English, my inability to speak or read German has forced me to rely on the English translations and thus my interpretation is derived from an incomplete reading of all of Marx's writings, and also suffers from an inability to deal with or appreciate both the linguistic and ideological subtleties that arise from the translation of Marx's work.

At the same time the secondary sources that deal with Marx's work are so extensive that I have only utilized those that I judged to be most relevant for my own purposes. In a similar vein, I have selected various examples from contemporary theories of social class either to compare them with Marx's own work, or to utilize them to assist in interpreting the meaning or possible meanings that might be derived from Marx's work. However, there is such an extensive internal division of labour in the field of Marxist studies that I have not been able to acquaint myself with all of the various debates over interpretation that surround Marx's theory of politics, ideology and economics. Because Marx's theory of social classes involves all three of these dimensions, I have often had to simplify or generalize what is involved as it pertains to the theory of social classes, and in doing so I have tried (especially in the third chapter) to provide footnotes either to offer further specifications or to indicate where some of these complex issues have been dealt with elsewhere in a more comprehensive fashion.

Last but not least, there is one other problem that is admittedly of a self-imposed nature. I have always felt that the

most outstanding contributions to theory, or the interpretation of theory, have been those that have been able to deal with their subject matter from a historical perspective such as C.B. Macpherson's Theory of Possessive Individualism, Barrington Moore's The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy, or Harry Braverman's Labour and Monopoly Capital. Marx himself, as both a theoretician and a revolutionary practitioner, was always conscious of the importance that must be attached to the historical dimension of social relationships and social structure. Accordingly, I have on occasion attempted, both for purposes of self-clarification and so as to facilitate a comprehensive presentation of this subject matter, to present a general overview of some of the important features of nineteenth century historical development that exercised an important influence on the work of Marx and Hegel. Here again I have found that the interpretation of nineteenth century history abounds in both rigorous intellectual debate and ideological polemic, so I have attempted to keep my analysis at a very general level.

I mention these problems not to apologize for what may or may not be regarded as an occasional lack of theoretical rigor, but simply out of intellectual honesty to explain why the title page contains the phrase "Toward an Interpretation". And it is toward this interpretation that we now turn our attention.

Marx's Theory of Social Classes: 1842-1844

A purely textual analysis would reveal that Marx's theory of social classes begins with the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, written in 1844. However, the analysis of theory, much like the analysis of history, can only be fully understood in terms of its internal development. Thus an understanding of Marx's position in 1844 must be preceded by an analysis of his early writings prior to the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts. This requires at the same time an assessment of how other social theorists perceived the nature of social classes and how their assessment affected the development of Marx's thought. Since, at this point, we are dealing with the work generally referred to as that of the "young Marx" we will delay our assessment of the work of the English political economists and the French Utopian socialists and turn instead to the political thought of Hegel.

Although much has been written of Marx's debt to Hegel, particularly in connection with the dialectical method, little attention has been devoted to Hegel's theory of social classes and the state and how this influenced Marx's own writings in the period 1840-1844. In fact, although Marx's theory of social classes developed in proportion to the development of his theory of historical materialism, the origins of this theory can be found in the early work concerning the role and nature of the state and in this respect Hegel's Philosophy of Right, written in 1821, is instrumental in terms of understanding the evolution of Marx's social theory.

Yet, in approaching the Hegel-Marx relationship, one must remember that the Hegelian system, although being understandable from a purely philosophical perspective in terms of Hegel's explanation of the actualization of spirit in the phenomenal world, must also be understood in terms of political economy and a sociology of knowledge that delineates the material conditions and social relationships prevalent in 19th century Germany. As Jean Hyppolite has pointed out,

"Hegel was writing at a time when capitalism was in its early stages in England and France and feudalism, although still rooted everywhere in Germany, was collapsing elsewhere as the bourgeoisie rose to power. It is in fact this world of the victorious, self-confident bourgeoisie and the world vision characteristic of the rising bourgeoisie that Hegel describes, as Goethe was doing about the same time. However, with a penetration peculiar to his dialectical genius, Hegel also perceives all the contradictions of this world in its mature form, all the crises that it carries within it, as the clouds carry a storm."¹

Hyppolite goes on to suggest, as has George Lukacs, that the work of Hegel prior to 1807 and the writing of the Phenomenology of Mind is intimately related to these historical developments and can be gauged by an assessment of Hegel's writing which in this period is very much characterized by an integration of political economy and philosophy. In summarizing these writings, Hyppolite points out that

"First there is Hegel's remarkable description of the rise of capitalist society. Drawing especially upon Adam Smith he describes the social division of labour, the development of technology, the co-operation of individuals in the production exchange and the consumption of wealth. Second, there is Hegel's prophetic vision of the contradictions in this society and the fatal alienation of man in a society where production for production's sake ... has no reason for its moderation.

Third, there is the impossibility given Hegel's historical position of resolving the contradictions of capitalist society which he perceived in such a profound manner. He could not resolve them because, as Lukacs points out, capitalist society was not mature enough, the forces of production - at this time in Germany less than elsewhere - were not yet developed enough."²

Although much has been written suggesting how Hegel abandoned this critical approach to theory during the period of the German Restoration, these profound historical developments discussed in his early writings retained their impact upon his later work. Thus in beginning with the Philosophy of Right and considering its impact on Marx's own writings, our attention although focusing primarily upon philosophy and philosophic method, as it applies to the state and social classes, will also

¹J. Hyppolite, Studies on Marx and Hegel, John O'Neill, transl. & ed., (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1973). p. 73

²Ibid., p. 76.

encompass Hegel's theory from the standpoint of political economy and in terms of a sociology of knowledge showing how the beginnings of a developing bourgeois social formation effected the structure of Hegel's thought. Such an approach will thus provide an integration of the political, economic and philosophical theory of social classes with the concrete development of social classes in the early 19th century.

To understand Hegel's conception of the state and social classes as they are developed in his work the Philosophy of Right, one must begin by treating the work in its relation to the totality of the Hegelian system. As Marcuse has pointed out,

"Some of the gravest misunderstandings that obscure the Philosophy of Right can be removed simply by considering the place of the work in Hegel's system. It does not deal with the whole cultural world, for the realm of right is but a part of the realm of mind, namely that part which Hegel denotes as objective mind. It does not in short expound or deal with the cultural realities of art, religion and philosophy which embody the ultimate truth for Hegel. The place that the Philosophy of Right occupies in the Hegelian system makes it impossible to regard the state, the highest reality within the realm of right, as the highest reality within the whole system. Even Hegel's most emphatic deification of the state cannot cancel his definite subordination of the objective to the absolute mind, of the political to the philosophic truth."³

Thus, what Marcuse is suggesting is that unlike other philosophies where ethical and political theory are treated separately, the Hegelian approach by contrast is one in which the ethical and the political are logical developments within the organic unity of the system itself. Thus in the final analysis Hegel's ethical and political theory, from which his notion of the state and social classes is derived, must be

³Herbert Marcuse, Reason And Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory. (New York: Humanities Press, 1963) 2nd edition. p.178.

seen first from the philosophical standpoint in terms of its position within the unfolding chain of the dialectic.

The dialectic itself, considered from its position of totality, is a triad that embraces logic, nature and spirit. Each of these spheres is in turn constituted by a subset of categories which in each instance assumes the triadic structure. Thus the logic has as its further definitive character the triad of Being, Essence and Notion, while spirit is in turn constituted by the triad of objective, subjective and absolute spirit. These subsets are in turn constituted by their own triadic structure and it is this triadic structure that appears consistently throughout the Hegelian system. A brief summary of this triadic structure is offered by W.T. Stace in the following terms.

"In each triad of the logic, the first category is the universal, the second is the particular, and the third is the singular. Being is the universal. The universal is infected with a negative element, a determination, a difference - nothing. This is the particular. The universal, being, as thus determined by particularity and difference becomes the singular becoming. And it is the same throughout the entire process of the logic, and throughout the rest of the system. The Logical Idea in general is the universal. Nature is the particular, the sphere of difference. The singular is the concrete spirit."⁴

It is from this triadic structure that the familiar Hegelian terms, thesis, antithesis and synthesis, arise. However, before dealing with the interplay of these elements, we must first elucidate the structural position of the ethical and the political within the dialectical system.

As Marcuse pointed out earlier, Hegel's ethical and political theory is found within the third sphere of the dialectic, the sphere which deals with the Philosophy of Spirit. This sphere, comprising the three moments of subjective, objective and absolute spirit, involves a long and arduous dialectical development in which spirit finally makes its presence known in the phenomenal world. For Hegel the subjective spirit, involving the triadic structure of soul, consciousness and mind, is

⁴W.T. Stace, The Philosophy of Hegel, (London: MacMillan & Co. Ltd., 1924). pp. 230-231.

considered from the standpoint of the development of man's inward nature. However, subjective spirit is essentially a moment of immediacy lacking any mediation from the external world. Objective spirit on the other hand is the moment of mediation. It is spirit which has issued out of the inwardness and embodied itself in the external world, thus becoming objective. The agency or process responsible for this process of objectification is the activity of the will. For Hegel, "Institutions are the work of the will putting itself forth into the world, moulding the crude material of the world into a new world of mind...."⁵.

In this process of objectifying itself into the external world objective spirit is at the same time founded upon free will because it is spirit which is willing itself; and since will involves willing the universal, the institutions which arise in the external world are thus the product and projection of mind itself and hence are, for Hegel, the embodiments of freedom. These institutions are constituted by the triadic structure of family, civil society and the state which comprise the three categories of social ethics and result in the introduction of Hegel's theory of the state and social classes.

These categories (family, civil society, state) that we have arrived at have been presented at the highest level of abstraction. We have only situated the categories in terms of their logical position within the series of deductions that Hegel makes in the process of unfolding his system. As such we are not speaking of a particular family or a particular state. These categories represent logical deductions rather than concrete historical instances. Thus we should not view Hegel's social ethics as a time ordered sequence beginning with the family and culminating in the state. These categories are a process of dialectical development and represent categories of pure thought. Just as the dialectic represents the development of spirit and its actualization in the world, it also represents the development

⁵Ibid., p.375.

of thought through the stages of intuition or common sense, understanding, and culminating in reason itself. It is this dialectic method which attempts to demonstrate the necessity of transcending the laws of formal logic by positing the existence of the unity of opposites; it is the same dialectic method which attempts to remove the ambiguous Kantian thing-in-itself and as a result has been justly described as the synthesis of the history of Western philosophy.

However, the dialectic, when treated at such a level of abstraction, tends to lose its social content. By moving from the highest levels of abstraction to a more concrete level, which involves viewing the content of the dialectic from the standpoint of philosophy and political economy, we will be able to grasp the significance of Hegel's theory of the state and social classes, and also we will see from the standpoint of a sociology of knowledge how "Hegel's ontological notions are saturated with a social content expressive of a particular order of society".⁶

We have already mentioned that Hegel was writing at a time when the feudal mode of production was reaching its last stages of disintegration. This process however was one characterized by uneven development, where France and Britain had already experienced their respective bourgeois revolutions while in Germany the bourgeois thrust was far from reaching its mature form. This retardation of German development that was such an enigma to both Marx and Hegel was partially transcended during the Napoleonic conquest which affected most of western Germany which was at the same time the industrial heartland concentrated mainly in the area known as the Rhineland. Along with the Napoleonic conquest came the Napoleonic civil code which promoted

"... civil equality, religious liberty, the abolition of the tithe and of feudal rights, the sale of ecclesiastic holdings, the suppression of the guilds, the multiplication of the bureaucracy and a 'wise and liberal' administration, a constitution which brought up with it the voting of taxes and

⁶ H. Marcuse, Op.Cit., p.77.

of laws by the notables, all these were to weave a network of interest closely bound with the maintenance of French domination."⁷

However, besides ensuring French domination, the Napoleonic code helped to remove many of those fetters which inhibited the development of capitalist relations of production. Unfortunately, though, for Germany's nascent bourgeoisie the effects of the Napoleonic conquest were short-lived as in 1815 the Treaty of Vienna annexed the Rhineland and other developed industrial areas such as Silesia and Westphalia to the state of Prussia. The annexation produced a conservative backlash resulting in the re-appropriation by the feudal landholders of those rights and privileges associated with a feudal rather than a capitalist mode of production. Thus the inability of Germany's bourgeoisie to effect a successful political revolution resulted in a contradictory social formation where the economic sphere remained a structural formation characteristic of a feudal mode of production while the cultural sphere was dominated by an ascending bourgeois ideology unable to actualize its existence in material form. Thus, "Culture then was essentially idealistic, occupied with the idea of things rather than with things themselves. It set freedom of thought before freedom of action, morality before practical justice, the inner life before the social life of man."⁸

This cultural dichotomy which reflected the struggle between feudal lord and bourgeoisie was incorporated into the earliest systems of German idealism, particularly in the works of Kant and Fichte and was in turn attacked by Hegel. As Marcuse explains it,

"The realm of freedom which is the inherent goal of reason cannot be achieved as Kant and Fichte thought by playing off the subject against the objective world, attributing to the autonomous person all the freedom that is lacking in the external world, and having the latter a domain of blind necessity. Hegel is here striking against the important mechanism of internalizing or introversion by which philosophy and literature generally have made liberty into an inner value to be realized within the soul alone."⁹

⁷ Ibid., p. 170.

⁸ Ibid., p. 10.

⁹ Ibid., p. 47.

What Hegel is espousing then is something we have already come into contact with, namely the externalization of subjective spirit into the objective world. The material basis of society and its corresponding institutional structure must be brought into correspondence with the already developed subjective spirit.

In the Philosophy of Right the first moment of this objectification or externalization is property. According to Hegel, "A person has as his substantive end the right of putting his will into any and everything and thereby making it his.... This is the absolute right of appropriation which man has over all 'things'." ¹⁰

This right of appropriation that Hegel deduces from the necessity of spirit to objectify itself results in the introduction of property.

"In property my will is the will of a presence; but a person is a unit and so property becomes the personality of this unitary will. Since property is the means whereby I give my will an embodiment, property must also have the character of being this or mine. This is the important doctrine of the necessity of private property." ¹¹

Thus (as the above paragraph indicates) not only has Hegel deduced property, he has deduced the institution as private property. These deductions of the right of appropriation and the "right" and "necessity" of private property are the first concrete instances of Hegel's ontological categories becoming laden with the principles of a specific developing social formation. As Marcuse has summarized it,

"We have here a first example of Hegel's identifying a law of nature with the law of competitive society. The 'nature' of free will is conceived in such a way that it refers to a particular historical form of the will, that of the individual as private owner, with private property serving as the first realization of freedom." ¹²

However this right of private property, its possession, use, and relinquishment are derived quite differently in the Hegelian system than they are in other such theories as those of Locke or Hobbes.

¹⁰G. Hegel, The Philosophy of Right, T.M. Knox, ed., 3rd edition, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949). p.41

¹¹Ibid., p.236

¹²H. Marcuse, Op. Cit., p. 187

While Locke linked the right of appropriation to the individual's capacity to labour, thus producing a labour theory of value, Hegel divorces property and labour leaving the condition of the former entirely dependent upon will and making property the cornerstone of the individual's personality which allows the ego to gain recognition from others.

"Existence as determinate being is in essence being for another. One aspect of property is that it is an existent as an external thing, and in this respect property exists for other external things and is connected with their necessity and contingency. But it is also an existent as an embodiment of the will, and from this point of view the 'other' for which it exists can only be the will of another person. This relation of will to will is the true and proper ground in which freedom is existent. The sphere of contract is made up of this mediation whereby I had property not merely by means of a thing and my subjective will, but by means of another person's will as will and so hold it in virtue of my participation in a common will. Reason makes it just as necessary for men to enter contractual relationships as to possess property ... Contract presupposes that the parties entering it recognize each other as persons and property owners."¹³

Thus private property and contract as the first moments of the externalization or objectification of spirit also constitute the first objective relations between ego and alter and represent objective relations characteristic of a developing bourgeois social formation. In this respect Marcuse is correct in asserting that "In the working out of the analysis, Hegel's conception loses its critical content and comes to serve as a metaphysical justification of private property."¹⁴ However, Marcuse pushes this point too far when he concludes "The Philosophy of Right is the philosophy of middle class society come to full consciousness ... the ontological idea reason is adjusted to the commodity producing society and given its concrete embodiment there."¹⁵

To place Hegel's political and ethical theory in the same context as other theories of "possessive individualism" is a mistake that arises from an interpretive analysis which focuses exclusively upon

¹³ G. Hegel, Op. Cit., p. 57.

¹⁴ H. Marcuse, Op. Cit., p. 189.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 183.

contract and property. Such an analysis cannot account for Hegel's theory of the state which represents at the theoretical level the very negation of bourgeois society. It is to this theory of the state and civil society that we now turn our attention.

At the philosophical level we have already mentioned that Hegel's social ethics is composed of the three moments, family, civil society and the state. The family as the moment of universality gives rise to civil society as the moment of mediation, and the contradiction between universality and particularity is resolved in the state which is the synthesis and represents the actuality of the ethical idea. However, when viewed from the standpoint of political economy, the content that Hegel ascribes to the state and civil society reveals a penetrating analysis of the contradictions of a developing bourgeois society, although as we will also demonstrate the analysis itself is laden with its own internal contradictions.

According to Hegel: "In civil society each member is his own end and everything else is nothing to him."¹⁶ However, as Hegel goes on to point out,

"In the course of the actual attainment of selfish ends ... there is formed a system of complete interdependence, wherein the livelihood, happiness and legal status of one man is interwoven with the livelihood, happiness and rights of all. On this system, individual happiness, etc., depend and only on this connected system are they actualized and secured."¹⁷

Thus, despite its atomistic appearance, civil society is essentially an interdependent system; it is as Hegel calls it "a chain of social connections" where each is dependent on the other for his existence. Thus, man's needs, although having their own particularity, are essentially social in nature. In order to fulfill his needs, man must partake in this interdependent system and this is achieved through labour which as Hegel demonstrates is also a social activity that mediates

¹⁶ G. Hegel, Op.Cit., p.267.

¹⁷ Ibid., p.123.

the particularity of the individual.

"Through work the raw material directly supplied by nature is specifically adapted to these numerous ends by all sorts of different processes ... It is the products of human effort which man consumes ... the abstraction process effects the subdivision of needs and means and thereby subdivides production and brings about the division of labour. By this division the work of the individual becomes less complex and consequently his skill at his section of the job increases like his output. At the same time the abstraction of one man's skill and means of production from another's completes and makes necessary everywhere the dependence of man on one another and their reciprocal relation in the satisfaction of their other needs."¹⁸

Hegel's analysis to this point has posited an interdependent system involving a multiplicity of needs whose satisfaction is dependent on the social activity of labour, an activity which results in a series of subdivisions such that the social division of labour accentuates the mutual dependency of each individual upon the other. At the same time these subdivisions become structured or, as Hegel says, they become "crystallized" and the result is that the production process becomes one which is characterized by "class divisions".

"The infinite complex, criss-cross movements of reciprocal production and exchange, and the infinite multiplicity of means therein employed, become crystallized ... As a result the entire complex is built up into particular systems of needs, means and types of work relative to these needs, modes of satisfaction and of theoretical and practical education, ie., into systems, to one or other of which individuals are assigned - in other words- into class divisions."¹⁹

Thus the production process is divided into a class system based upon different spheres of productive activity. This class system in accordance with the method of the dialectic is characterized by a triadic structure, the three classes being the agricultural class, the business class and the bureaucracy.

The agricultural class, known also as the substantial or immediate class is of a peculiar nature in that it is composed of day labourers,

¹⁸ Ibid., p.129.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.131.

peasants, sharecroppers and land holders. Hegel fails to distinguish the internal divisions of this class and in fact the role of the internal conflict between lord and peasant is conspicuously absent as Hegel attributes a very homogeneous character to this class based on a form of class consciousness where the man-nature relationship transcends and dominates the lord-serf relationship.

"The agricultural class has its capital in the natural products of the soil which it cultivates ... the agricultural mode of subsistence remains one which owes comparatively little to reflection and independence of will, and this mode of life is in general such that this class has the substantial disposition of an ethical life which is immediate resting on family relationship and trust ... The member of this class accepts unreflectively what is given him and takes what he gets thanking God for it ... So far as this class is concerned nature does the major part while the individual effort is secondary."²⁰

The reflecting or formal business class is subdivided into three spheres according to the differing nature of their productive activity. These spheres relate to craftsmanship, manufacture and trade. However, just as the agricultural class subsumes both lord and serf, the business class encompasses the respective agents of both capital and labour. The homogeneity that Hegel attributes to this class arises from the fact that its means of livelihood is dependent on work and reflection and thus it represents a class where the respective members are dependent on themselves rather than upon nature. Therefore, as the following quote demonstrates, the nature of Hegel's theory of social classes, although arising originally from the different forms of productive activity, is essentially a psychological or philosophical theory based upon the nature of class consciousness.

"In the business class, the individual is thrown back on himself and this feeling of selfhood is intimately connected with the demand for law and order. The sense of freedom and order has thus arisen in the towns. The agricultural class on the other hand has little occasion to think of itself. What it obtains is a gift of a stranger of nature. Its feeling of dependence is fundamental to it, and with this feeling there is readily associated a willingness to submit to whatever may befall it at other men's hands. The agricultural class is thus more inclined to

²⁰ Ibid., p.270.

subservience, the business class to freedom."²¹

Thus having placed excessive emphasis on class consciousness as the determinant element, Hegel's analysis leads to a theory of class formation where the subjective factor is again predominant and class mobility becomes dependent on the exercise of will. "The question of the particular class to which an individual is to belong is one on which natural capacity, birth and other circumstances have their influence, though the essential and final determining factors are subjective opinion and the individual's arbitrary will ..."²²

However, one should not conclude from these remarks that Hegel's theory of social classes is simply a product of philosophical abstraction. The role of conflict and contradiction, which is central within the dialectic method itself, can also be found in a concrete form in Hegel's depiction of the socio-economic tendencies characteristic of the 19th century. Hegel points out that in the process of industrialization poverty has reached disturbing proportions and the process of pauperization is simply the corollary of those tendencies which "greatly facilitate a concentration of disproportionate wealth in a few hands".

Hegel goes on to identify the consequences of this tendency, foreshadowing the work of Marx, by demonstrating that the reciprocal effects of pauperization and monopolization result in an economic imbalance characterized by overproduction and underconsumption which results in the necessary development of a nascent form of imperialism:

"This inner dialectic of civil society thus drives it - or at any rate drives a specific civil society - to push beyond its own limits and seek markets in other lands which are either deficient in the goods it has overproduced or else is generally backward in industry ... This far flung connecting link affords the means of colonizing activity - sporadic or systematic to which the mature civil society is driven and by which it supplies to a part of its own population a return to life on the family basis in a new land and so also supplies itself with a new demand, and a field for its industry."²³

²¹Ibid., p.270.

²²Ibid., p.132.

²³Ibid., p.151.

Although these insights lead Hegel to conclude that "poverty immediately takes the form of wrong done to one class by another", we must conclude that given the very subjective approach taken in his analysis of class, and given his inclusion of lord and peasant, capitalist and labourer within the agricultural and business classes respectively, the conflict he speaks of does not involve specific antagonistic social classes, but rather it involves the relation between privileged and unprivileged groups of individuals. As Lukacs has summarized it, "Naturally Hegel has no clear insights into what is involved here, if only because his view of the economic basis of class conflict does not go beyond an empirical division into rich and poor, and this is not sufficient for him to deduce any significant theoretical conclusions."²⁴

Despite the weakness that is present in his theoretical articulation of class conflict, Hegel's analysis has at least situated the presence of antagonisms within the socio-economic tendencies of civil society. In fact, in terms of Marcuse's suggestion that Hegel's ontological categories become saturated with the content of a developing bourgeois social formation, we may hypothesize that the Hegelian conception of the "particularity" of civil society is synonymous with the development and operation of the market system. Hegel's conception of the interdependency of the individual members of civil society, his discussion of the breakdown of the traditional family structure, his depiction of the growth in the commercialization of agriculture, the tendencies of over-production and underconsumption, and the fact that civil society reinforced and furthered natural inequality through its emphasis on skill, resources and intellectual attainment; all these descriptions suggest that the particularity of civil society is synonymous or correlative with the anarchy that the market system represented.

At the same time, the changing character of the relations of production in Germany during Hegel's own lifetime also bear witness to

²⁴George Lukacs, The Young Hegel, (London: Merlin Press, 1975), p.540.

our hypothesis in that it was during the period 1800-1850 that the guild system was undermined by the introduction of an unfettered market system. As one authority on this transformation has pointed out, the old handicraft system was by its very nature only suited to a static communal order:

"It was designed to meet the needs of a stable population, to maintain an unchanging standard of living, to supply a market local in scope. As for the structure and outlook of artisan guilds, they reflected the pastoral economic world in which they had matured. They sought to regulate output in such a way as to assure an adequate supply of goods for the consumer and a fast return for the producer. Endowed by the state with quasi legal powers, they sought to prescribe methods of manufacture, prices and wages, terms of employment, and standards of workmanship. Their ultimate goal was the achievement of a social justice appropriate to a rural polity composed of autonomous corporate interests. The advantages inherent in mechanical efficiency and competitive individualism were renounced for the sake of security and order."²⁵

However, as we have already mentioned, the Napoleonic code which included the abolition of serfdom, and the relaxation of industrial regulation, greatly undermined the working of this local and controlled market mechanism. The reintroduction of a laissez faire economic policy by the various German absolutist states gradually undermined the rights and privileges of the guilds while the introduction of the factory system, the expansion of the market, and the increase in population resulted in the proletarianization of the Master tradesman, journeymen and apprentices alike. The cumulative effects of this process undermined the traditional stability of the feudal order and gave rise to tendencies we have already mentioned in regard to Hegel's own work. As Theodore Hamerow points out in summarizing these events,

"The growth of industrialism therefore presented a serious threat to the social equilibrium of central Europe for it undermined the way of life of millions still dependent on a precapitalist

²⁵ Theodore Hamerow, Restoration, Revolution and Reaction: Economics and Politics in Germany, 1815-1871, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1958), p.21.

organization of production. The rulers of Germany impressed with the economic and military advantages offered by the factory system overlooked the disruptive tendencies which came in its wake. Familiar with the guild traditions of conservatism and orderliness, they remained blind to the cumulative effects of years of suffering on the lower classes. And so the artisan, having exhausted all peaceful means of influencing the course of government policy, driven to despair by the prospect of economic annihilation, broke at last with established authority and sought salvation in a new political order."²⁶

Although Hegel, who died in 1831, was unable to witness the artisan revolt and the revolutions that shook central Europe in 1848, he did manage to foresee the consequences of an unrestricted market system. His theory of reinforcing the existence of the medieval corporation which, as Avineri has pointed out, acts as "a dialectical mediation between the state and the civil society" ²⁷ was a proscriptive response that Hegel deemed necessary if the transition to modernity was to be accomplished in an orderly manner. The position of the corporation which was essentially Hegel's response to the gradual disintegration of the guild system again reinforces our hypothesis of the civil society/market relationship in Hegel's thought.

Although the corporation could act as an important agency of mediation, Hegel recognized that only state power would be a sufficient force to offset the anarchy created by the new emerging market society. Thus his theory of social classes introduces a third class, the synthetic element which was to lend the social formation its universal character. This class, the universal class as Hegel termed it, was the bureaucracy. And it is precisely the universal nature of this class that brings us to Hegel's theory of the state, and also the Marxist critique whereby Hegel's universal bureaucracy is substituted by Marx for his universal class, the proletariat.

In dealing with the Hegelian theory of the state we must again proceed on two distinct levels. The first level is the philosophical

²⁶ Ibid., p.37

²⁷ S. Avineri, Hegel's Theory of the Modern State, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p.166.

where the state is a category of the dialectic and thus an abstract category of thought, a deduction in the unfolding chain of logic. The state is the third moment of the triadic structure of the objective spirit and represents the synthesis of the other one-sided moments represented by the family and civil society. But, at the same time, the state is an institution and, as Stace has pointed out,

"To deduce an institution is to show its necessity, to show that there is a logical necessity, a necessity of reason that it should arise at the place and in the way it does arise. Hence all the institutions which we study in objective spirit are regarded by Hegel as the necessary forms in which reason embodies itself ... They are phases of the necessary self-evolution of the Idea. They are steps in the progress by which the absolute becomes²⁸ in the world process, conscious of itself and of what it is."

Thus at the philosophical level the state as the highest form of objective spirit becomes for Hegel "the actuality of the ethical idea". And this actuality is a necessity because, for Hegel, "the Idea ... releases its moments from itself as totalities". Thus its necessity is an internal necessity arising from the contradictions that are contained within the Idea through its various stages of development.*

The state that Hegel describes may also be dealt with at another level of philosophical abstraction which focuses upon the content of Hegel's ethical theory. This approach involves dealing with the dialectic not as a method but as a reality that becomes concretized in the course of world history. In such an approach the focus of attention is directed upon the individual's development within the state during the various stages of history, showing the development of self-consciousness as individual potentiality became actuality with the synthesis of the inward and outward life. When treated at this level of analysis, Hegel's ethical theory takes on a historical dimension that perceives the effect upon consciousness of the state/

²⁸ W.T. Stace, Op.Cit., p.377.

* G.Hegel, The Philosophy of Right, Op.Cit., pp.155-56, and 176.

civil society dichotomy or, as Rousseau called it, the dichotomy of *l'homme et citoyen*. A summary of Hegel's perception of these developments is presented by Professor O'Malley in the following terms:

"The separation of private and political life first occurred within the Roman Empire with the withdrawal of the individual from the life of the city and his concomitant self enclosure within a private restricted sphere where his concerns centred on himself, his property and his work. The state consequently assumed the form of an alien power, a form of alienation. Enclosed within his own limited sphere, and thus deprived of a sense of participation in the common and universal, the private man sought solace in a postulated realm of universality, a divine realm separate from the limited sphere of his individual and finite life. Thus political and religious alienation developed *pari passu*."²⁹

Thus, in depicting the decline of the cohesive nature of the Greek polis where man's public and private life were integrated, Hegel's ethical theory culminates in the development of a new political state that transcends the private character of civil society and represents the reintegration of what Hegel called the burgher-citoyen dichotomy. However, for purposes of this analysis, we will treat Hegel's theory of the state in a manner that links that concept of the state to the concept of social class. We will do this by beginning with a general account of Hegel's approach and then we will deal with this approach in more detail in terms of Marx's critique of Hegel's theory.

We have already discussed the particularity that civil society represented to Hegel and how civil society itself is synonymous with the market mechanism. Such a state of affairs requires the necessity of mediation and although the corporations of civil society and the existence of the estates system serve this mediating role, an element of universality is required to transcend the private interests of individuals, and the power that normally is associated with landed property. This element of universality was realizable according to Hegel in the bureaucracy.

²⁹ K. Marx, Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, Joseph O'Malley, editor, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p.XLV.

"The universal class [the class of civil servants] has for its task the universal interests of the community. It must therefore be relieved from direct labour, to supply its needs either by having private means or by receiving an allowance from the state which claims its industry; with the result that private interest finds its satisfaction in its work for the universal."³⁰

The universal class which was to serve what Hegel called the executive function as opposed to the legislative and monarchical functions, was to be drawn from the "middle classes" whom Hegel regarded as the "ground pillar of the state". The bureaucracy then, although serving a functional role of mediation between the universal and the particular interests of society, derives its class character essentially from the nature of its consciousness:

"Public service demands the sacrifice of independent self satisfaction and the giving up of the pursuit of private ends, but grants the right of finding these in dutiful service, and in it only. Here in lies the unity of the universal and the particular interests which constitutes the concept and the inner stability of the state."³¹

This class at the same time was to be characterized as a meritocracy rather than an aristocracy; for only if knowledge and proven ability were regarded as standards of admission could this class remain open to all the citizens of the state. Thus in establishing the relationship between the bureaucracy and the other classes that Hegel discusses, one sees, as Avineri has demonstrated, that the Hegelian conception of class is very much dependent on the factor of consciousness:

"Class divisions determine not only a person's purely economic mode of life but are a totality which impinges on the whole of his life. A person's consciousness is moulded in accordance with his membership of a particular class. The three classes, the agricultural class, the business class and the bureaucracy - thus reflect three modes of consciousness: conservatism, individualism and universality."³²

However, despite the subjective orientation of Hegel's theory of social classes, his theory of the bureaucracy is very much a reflection of the historical development of the Prussian bureaucracy

³⁰ G. Hegel, The Philosophy of Right, T.M. Knox, editor, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1942), p. 132.

³¹ Ibid., p.146.

³² S. Avineri, Op.Cit., p.156.

during the period 1780-1830.

"The bureaucracy had emancipated itself socially as well as institutionally from the feudal order. The monopoly which the landed aristocracy had once exercised over the civil service profession was terminated by a process which involved both a change in the composition of the bureaucracy and a reorientation of the value system of the administrative and judicial elite. Prussia's bureaucracy had not only ceased to recruit exclusively from the landed nobility, but had come to feel itself separate from and in conflict with the traditional aristocracy. Its members viewed themselves as an "aristocracy" of service whose functions made it deserving of a privileged position equal if not superior to that of the landed aristocracy ... During the first decades of the 19th century its members had thought themselves "a universal estate" capable of reconciling the differences of various parts of society."³³

Yet, despite this correspondence between his theory and the history of his own time period, Hegel's theory of the link between social classes and the state lacks, as Lukacs pointed out earlier, an economic basis for class conflict and therefore does not attempt to approach the relationship between state power and class power. The result is a theory of the state and of social classes that overemphasizes the subjective element and defines away many of the important objective factors. In other words, it becomes a theory based upon modes of consciousness rather than modes of production.

However, the theory of the state and social classes is entirely consistent with Hegel's framework of analysis which he described in the following terms.

"But if we ask what is or has been the historical origin of the state in general; still more if we ask about the origin of any particular state of its rights and institutions, or again if we inquire whether the state originally arose out of patriarchial conditions or out of fear or trust, or out of corporations, or finally if we ask in what light the basis of the state's rights has been conceived and consciously established, whether this basis has been supposed to be positive divine right, or contract, custom, all these questions are no concern of the Idea of the State. We are here dealing exclusively with the philosophic science of

³³ J. Gillis, Aristocracy and Bureaucracy in 19th Century Prussia, Past and Present, #41, 1968. p.106.

the state, and from that point of view all these things are mere appearance and therefore matters for history ... The philosophical treatment of these topics is concerned only with their inward side with the thought of this concept."³⁴

It is precisely this approach which is characteristic of the Hegelian system of objective idealism and as we will now demonstrate it was precisely this framework of analysis and its application to the state and social classes that Marx criticized and in doing so began the development of his own theory of social classes.

Professor Joseph O'Malley has pointed out in regard to Marx's Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right that,

"Marx employs three critical techniques in the course of the critique. The first, which is borrowed from Ludwig Feurbach, is generally referred to as the transformative method of criticizing Hegelian speculative philosophy. The second is straightforward textual analysis and explication. The third is the historico-genetic method of criticism."³⁵

It should be emphasized however that it is mainly Hegel's philosophical method that is in question in the critique, and Marx credits Hegel for depicting a fairly accurate assessment of the Prussian state itself. This philosophical method that Marx is attacking is essentially rooted in the entire structure of Hegel's dialectical system, and it is a method, as we have already seen, which attains its explanatory capacity by beginning with the Idea and its various manifestations as categories of thought, categories which then determine empirical reality itself. As O'Malley has summarized it,

"It is the idea which is conceived by Hegel to be, the efficacious principle or acting subject, which operates according to its own immanent teleology. Correlatively Hegel reduces actual human deeds and institutions to the status of "allegorical" existences, particular modes of the Idea and phases of its self-determination. They are merely phenomenal beings, appearances of the Idea, receptacles for its manifestation and actualization; they are incarnations of an alien reality, thus do not have substantial being, form, meaning or purpose of their own. This in sum is Hegel's logical pantheistic mysticism; he makes the

³⁴G. Hegel, Op.Cit., p.156.

³⁵K. Marx, Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, p.XXIX.

Idea the creative, mystical subject and empirical actualities its products and predicates."³⁶

The revolt against this form of speculative philosophy was crystallized in the writings of Ludwig Feuerbach, particularly in two of his works, The Provisional Thesis for the Reform of Philosophy and The Essence of Christianity. According to Feuerbach,

"Speculative philosophy is guilty of the same error as theology namely the error of making the determination of what is actual or finite into determinations or predicates of the infinite ... All speculation over right, will, freedom, personality, without man, outside of or completely above man is speculation without unity, necessity, substance, ground or reality. Man is the existence of freedom, the existence of personality, the existence of right. Thus man alone is the ground and basis of the Fichtean I, the ground and basis of the Leibnitzian monad, the ground and basis of the absolute."³⁷

Thus Feuerbach was suggesting that Hegelian speculative philosophy made God the subject and man the determined predicate when in fact the relationship was the exact opposite. This inversion of subject and predicate constituted the basis of the Feuerbachian transformative method and was taken out of its theological context in the early writings of Marx and applied to the realm of the political. This constituted Marx's first major theoretical break with the Hegelian system (although the break was far from complete), and resulted in Marx being able to approach the question of the state and social classes in terms of categories and concepts derived from empirical reality rather than abstract thought.

According to Marx the Hegelian approach in the Philosophy of Right is inadequate because, as we have already seen, the Idea takes on an independent existence of its own.

"The Idea is given the status of a subject, and the actual relationship of family and civil society to the state is conceived to be its inner imaginary activity. Family and civil society are the presuppositions of the state; they are the

³⁶ Ibid., p.XXXII.

³⁷ Ibid., p.XXX:

really active things; but in speculative philosophy it is reversed. But if the idea is made subject then the real subjects - civil society, family, circumstances, caprice, etc. - become unreal and take on the different meaning of objective moments of the idea."³⁸

However, despite this inadequacy, Marx credits Hegel for depicting civil society as "the bellum omnium contra omnes". For although in Hegel "the true method is turned upside down" the value of the dialectical method lies in its portrayal of the constant struggle that man is engaged in:

"For Hegel ... civil society is the battlefield where everyone's individual private interest meets everyone else's, so here we have the struggle of private interests against particular matters of common concern and of both of these together against the organization of the state and its higher outlook."³⁹

For Marx it is precisely by recognizing the existence of struggle and contradiction that Hegel's theory retains its intrinsic value. The Hegelian system may have a static or even reactionary political content but the Hegelian method, the dialectic, with its emphasis upon negation as determination, remains implicitly critical in its approach, and thus can be restructured and utilized as a method of critical analysis. As Marx expresses it so well, "We recognize Hegel's profundity precisely in the way he always begins with and accentuates the antithetical character of the determinate elements."⁴⁰

However, even in terms of the content of Hegel's system, Marx finds much that is useful in terms of a point of departure for critical theory. In this respect he suggests "Hegel's keenest insight lies in his sensing the separation of civil and political society to be a contradiction." However, in Hegel this contradiction is a product of the Idea's development. Thus its dissolution is contingent upon a logical transcendence within thought rather than an historical transcendence within concrete reality. What is required in place of Hegel's speculative approach is first an historical understanding of

³⁸ Ibid. p. 8.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 42.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 55.

how this contradiction arose, and second a political strategy for transcending this contradiction in the real world so that civil and political society become a unity.

In terms of developing this historical approach, The Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right represents the first attempt by Marx to link history and class analysis. He begins by pointing out that:

"The spirit of the Middle Ages can be represented thus: the classes of civil society and the political classes were identical because civil society was political society, because the organic principle of civil society was the principle of the state.... The whole existence of the medieval classes was political: their existence was the existence of the state. Their legislative activity, their grant for taxes for the realm was merely a particular issue of their universal political significance and efficacy. Their class was the state... They did not become classes because they participated in legislation; rather they participated in legislation because they were political classes."⁴¹

However "It is a development of history that has transformed the political classes into social classes ... The real transformation of the political classes into civil classes took place under absolute monarchy ... Only the French Revolution completed the transformation of the political classes into social classes; in other words, made the class distinctions of civil society into merely social distinctions pertaining to private life but meaningless in political life. With that the separation of political life and civil society was complete."⁴²

In these few short paragraphs, Marx has presented a very astute summation of the development of classes between the 13th and 18th centuries. The ascendance of the medieval parliaments in the thirteenth century occurred because under feudalism the political and economic were enjoined in a system of parcellized sovereignty where lord and serf were held together by a system of dues, rights and obligations such that the monarch had no legal basis for imposing economic levies. Thus, as Marx points out, the medieval classes were at the same time political classes because the monarch was dependent upon their support for the raising of revenues. However, during the 15th, 16th and 17th

⁴¹Ibid., p.72.

⁴²Ibid., p.80.

centuries, the monarchy became in many instances more centralized using its increased political power to create more uniform legal systems, to create a permanent bureaucracy, to raise standing armies, and implement a national tax system.⁴³ Thus, as Marx points out, the formal political power of the medieval classes declined in proportion to the development of the absolutist state. With the French Revolution this decline in their formal political power was completed and there arose the distinction between political and civil society; that is, the formal separation between the political and the economic.

Certainly these few brief passages from Marx cannot be construed as a theoretical articulation of the historical development of classes. There is no discussion of the rise of the mercantile and manufacturing classes, of their relationship to the absolute state, or the corresponding development of the market system. And perhaps more importantly, Marx does not include an analysis of how the political power of the absolutist state reflected the respective class interests of the medieval classes.

These important factors which would receive greater elaboration in the later writings of both Marx and Engels, could not be developed at this time because the conceptual apparatus required for class analysis was still undeveloped. This work of the young Marx is essentially a critique of Hegelianism within Hegelianism so that the concepts mode of production, class struggles and class domination, concepts necessary to construct a historical theory of classes, were quite apparently absent. However, what is important here is the distinction Marx makes between the medieval political classes and the emerging social classes of the 18th and 19th centuries. It is only with the breakdown of the medieval estates system and the separation of civil and political society, that is, the formal separation of the political and the economic, that the study of social classes begins. Accordingly,

⁴³ Perry Anderson, Lineages of the Absolutist State, (London: New Left Books, 1974), p.18.

although we will see Marx in his latter writing discussing the role and nature of classes in all the different historical epochs from antiquity to present, it is only when the separation of civil and political society is complete that a theory of social classes in the modern sense of the term, ie., social classes as a product of civil society, can begin to be developed.

Marx does attempt to further the development of the distinction between medieval political classes and the developing social classes. He points out that once civil society became separated from political society, class "distinction" rested on neither need nor politics: "It is a division of the masses whose development is unstable and whose very structure is arbitrary and in no sense an organization."⁴⁴

This passage, when considered within the context of the two or three pages that Marx devotes to the changing character of class, suggests that the breakup of the medieval class system resulted in the blurring of formal class distinctions. A new process of class formation within civil society had begun but in no sense had become formalized. Thus in pointing to the types of class distinction that were emerging, Marx notes the distinction between town and country and suggests that "money and education were the prevalent criteria" for distinguishing between the newly forming social classes. At the same time Marx, foreshadowing the later work of Weber, also suggests,

"The medical man for instance forms no particular class in civil society. One businessman belongs to a class different from that of another businessman, ie., he belongs to another social position. Just as civil society is separated from political society, so within itself civil society is separated into class and social position, even though some relations obtain between them."⁴⁵

However, once again it must be emphasized that, other than the distinction made concerning the transition from political to social classes, these suggestions posited by Marx should be viewed as sketches

⁴⁴ K. Marx, Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, p.81.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.83.

that remain incomplete. Marx mentions that this subject will be developed further in another section of the critique entitled "Civil Society" but unfortunately he never undertook this task.

These two or three pages that Marx devotes to the subject of classes do not constitute the only references he makes to this subject in the critique. He also devotes a large portion of the analysis to Hegel's concept of bureaucracy as the universal class and also the concept of private property. These two themes are important not only in terms of enabling Marx to develop his critique of Hegel, but also in terms of assisting in the development of the conceptual apparatus required for a theory of class analysis.

In terms of dealing with the institution of private property Marx is essentially concerned with property as possession of land. He is not as such dealing with bourgeois property relations but rather with property as Hegel had dealt with it in terms of the nobility and the system of premogeniture.

According to Hegel the landed gentry and aristocracy, as members of the agricultural class which embodied the substantive ethical life associated with the family, were to receive political representation in the state via an institution of English tradition, the chamber of peers. Although this class and its interests were to be balanced by the representation of the business class in the chamber of deputies, Hegel believed that the land-holding class could hold office without solely promoting their own economic interests because of the guarantees provided by the system of premogeniture. This system of premogeniture "ensured that the family estate passed in toto from father to first-born son: the eldest son inherited both the title and the estate in its entirety, all the other children being excluded from the inheritance as far as landed property was concerned. By making the landed estates of the nobility and the gentry virtually inalienable by way of sale,

this arrangement prevented the fragmentation of the noble estates and preserved them intact."⁴⁶ The result was, for Hegel, the creation of a stable and independent class, unusually well-fitted for public duty because of its ties to the family rather than to the arbitrary functioning of the market. Marx on the other hand maintained that Hegel's theory of premogeniture and representation resulted in private property becoming the foundation of the state. "Thus at its highest point, the political constitution is the constitution of private property. The highest political inclination is the inclination of private property. Premogeniture is merely the external appearance of the internal nature of the possession of land."⁴⁷

In a similar vein, Marx goes on to suggest that rather than creating an independent class based on the system of premogeniture, Hegel not only has created a dependent class whose interests must necessarily be dependent upon and determined by the demands of private property, but also a society characterized by what one might call the fetishism of property. This arises in Hegel's theory according to Marx, because property represents the objectification of man's will into a concrete form, property, which in turn gives rise to man's recognition by the will of others. However, Marx sees the effects of this relationship from another perspective and describes it in terms that foreshadow the development of his theory of commodity fetishism.

"The inalienability of private property is the alienability of universal freedom of will and ethical life. Here it is no longer the case that property is in so far as I put my will into it, but rather my will is in so far as it is in property. Here my will does not own, but is owned."⁴⁸

Thus far from being the actualization of the ethical idea, or the concretization of freedom, Marx sees Hegel's state as "the religion of private property". Private property then appears from this perspective

⁴⁶ S. Avineri, The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968). p.28

⁴⁷ K. Marx, Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, p.99.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p.101.

as the fundamental determination of the political state, both as it was theoretically misconstrued in Hegel's theory, and as it emerged in its concrete manifestations in Prussia.

Despite the interest that Marx has demonstrated in the institution of private property, its theoretical formulation is guided by a philosophical approach which while having a historical perspective attached to it is essentially devoid of any economic criteria. While Marx discusses the political significance of private property he does not discuss private property in terms of its function within the relations of production. This does not imply that the concept of property is not linked to the concept of class. Marx does provide such a linkage in terms of medieval classes prior to the separation of political and civil society; but in terms of its relation to social classes, that is classes arising after this separation, Marx's analysis only contains several isolated references.

The bureaucracy on the other hand appears to be a concept that is much more fruitful in terms of developing further the definitive character of social classes. While Hegel had seen the bureaucracy as a universal class capable of mediating the conflicting interests of civil society, Marx saw the bureaucracy as a class whose inherent character prevented it from fulfilling such a role.

"The bureaucracy asserts itself to be the final end of the state ... it comes into conflict everywhere with the real aims... The aims of the state are transformed into aims of bureau's or the aims of bureau's into the aims of the state ... Accordingly authority is the principle of its knowledge and being, and the deification of authority is its mentality... As far as the individual bureaucrat is concerned the end of the state becomes his private end: a pursuit of higher posts; the building of a career."⁴⁹

This social-psychological approach that Marx adopts in discussing both the bureaucracy and property fetishism is characteristic of his critique of Hegelianism within Hegelianism despite the utilization of Feuerbach's transformative method of criticism. Yet out of this critique of the bureaucracy as the universal class comes Marx's own

⁴⁹ Ibid., p.46.

demand for a universal class: "In a true state it is not a question of the possibility of every citizen to dedicate himself to the universal in the form of a particular class, but of the capability of the universal class to be really universal, ie., to be the class of every citizen."⁵⁰

The question then arises: What are the criteria required for the existence of such a class? For Marx the criteria initially rests upon the reintegration of civil and political society which, in the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, leads Marx to advocate the implementation of universal suffrage. However, in the article "On the Jewish Question", written in the same year, Marx recognizes that although universal suffrage involves the elimination of the property qualification, this is only the abolition of the political form of private property, its content remains as a determination of the political state.

6 "Yet the political annulment of private property, not only does not abolish it but even presupposes it. The state abolishes distinctions of birth, rank, education and occupation in its fashion when it declares them to be non-political distinctions, when it proclaims that every member of the community equally participates in popular sovereignty without regard to these distinctions, and when it deals with all elements of the actual life of the nation from the standpoint of the state. Nevertheless the state permits private property, education and occupation to act and manifest their particular nature as private property, education and occupation in their own ways. Far from overcoming these factual distinctions, the state only exists by presupposing them; it is aware of itself as a political state and makes its universality effective only in opposition to these elements."⁵¹

By recognizing the limitations of purely political reform, Marx has reached a crucial theoretical juncture. The political state/civil society dichotomy cannot be resolved as Hegel had maintained by the development of universality within the state. On the contrary, the prerequisites required for a universal state arise from developments within civil society itself. Therefore the emergence of a universal

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.50.

⁵¹ L. Easton & K. Guddat, Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society, (Garden City: Doubleday & Co. Ltd., 1967), p.225.

class is dependent upon the developments within civil society, and such a universal class must be a product of civil society. In the second portion of his Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, Marx describes the role that a universal class must play and how this role is related to the internal development of civil society itself.

"No one class of civil society can play this role unless it arouses in itself and in its masses a moment of enthusiasm, a moment in which it associates, fuses and identifies itself with society in general and is felt and recognized to be society's general representation, a moment in which its demands and rights are truly those of society itself of which it is the social head and heart."⁵²

The development of this hegemony within civil society is according to Marx characterized by a dialectical process.

"For a popular revolution and the emancipation of a particular class to coincide, for one class to stand for the whole of society, another class must on the other hand concentrate in itself all the defects of society, must be the class of universal offense and the embodiment of universal limits. A particular social sphere must stand for the notorious crime of the whole society, so that liberation from this sphere appears to be universal liberation."⁵³

Marx points to the dialectical opposition between the French nobility, the clergy and the bourgeoisie as an example of one class gaining its positive significance as a result of another class's negative significance. Then, having introduced the theme of hegemony as it arises from the dialectical opposition between classes, Marx generalizes these developments and their application to Germany, and arrives at his first speculative insights into the role and nature of class conflict and class struggle in history:

"Each sphere of civil society suffers its defeat before it celebrates its victory, erects its own barriers before it overthrows its opposing barriers, asserts its narrow-minded nature before it can assert its generosity, so that the opportunity of

⁵² K. Marx, Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, p.140.

⁵³ Ibid., p.140.

playing a great role has passed before it ever actually existed, and each class, at the moment it begins to struggle with the class above, it is involved in the struggle with the class beneath. Hence the princes are in conflict with the king, the bureaucracy with the nobility, the bourgeoisie with all of them. While the proletariat is already beginning its struggle against the bourgeoisie, the middle class hardly dares to conceive of the idea of emancipation from its own point of view, and the development of social conditions and the progress of political theory show that this point of view itself is antiquated, or at least questionable."⁵⁴

The above passage is very representative of Marx's utilization of the Hegelian dialectic. The essence of the dialectic is, as Marx had pointed out earlier, the accentuation of the antithetical character of the determinate elements. Thus for Marx the positive universal aspirations that a rising class espouses in its attempt to attain hegemonic dominance are negated by its essential particularistic nature. The particular nature that a class exhibits limits its capability of universalizing itself, and this very limitation constitutes the basis upon which a new class will rise in opposition to the old. How is the process to end? For Marx the answer is clear:

"Our answer: in the formation of a class with radical chains, a class in civil society, that is not of civil society, a class that is the dissolution of all classes, a sphere of society having a universal character because of its universal suffering and claiming no particular right because no particular wrong, but unqualified wrong, is perpetrated upon it; a sphere that can claim no traditional title but only a human title, a sphere that does not stand partially opposed to the consequences but totally opposed to the premises of the German political system; a sphere finally that cannot emancipate itself without emancipating itself from all the other spheres of society, thereby emancipating them; a sphere in short that is the complete loss of humanity and can only redeem itself through the total redemption of humanity. The dissolution of society existing as a particular class is the proletariat."⁵⁵

The emergence of the proletariat as the universal class represents the culmination of Marx's theory of social classes as this theory had been developed prior to the 1844 Manuscripts. Certainly there is a

⁵⁴ Ibid., p.141.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p.141.

very definite intellectual debt that Marx owes to the German socialists such as Lorenz Von Stein, Wilhelm Weitling and Karl Grun as well as the French theoreticians such as Proudhon and Fourier for their contributions in developing the thesis concerning the historical relevance of the proletariat.

However, in the final analysis the concept of the proletariat and various theories of communism that Marx was associated with appear to remain of secondary importance compared to the profound impact that the Hegelian system and its dialectical method had in assisting Marx in developing his first speculative insights into the role and nature of social classes. It was through his critique of Hegel's theory of the state and social classes that Marx first began to develop theoretically the relations between the state and civil society, the critique of private property and above all else the concept of class conflict.

At the same time, from the standpoint of a sociology of knowledge, one cannot minimize the importance of the material conditions and class relationships that were developing in Germany and elsewhere in Europe in terms of their impact upon the work of both Marx and Hegel. The "universal suffering" and immiseration of the German proletariat and the revolutionary implications that Marx had briefly discussed is ably summarized by W.O. Henderson in the following terms.

"The growth of modern industries in Germany led to social evils similar to those which had occurred in Britain. In the summer of 1824 reports from the provincial authorities showed that in the manufacturing districts of Prussia the labour of children was being exploited in a disgraceful manner. In 1828 General Von Horn warned the prussian government that these districts could not supply their quota of army recruits, since the health of young factory workers was being undermined ... The decline of the handicraft system - owing to competition from machine-made products - caused great hardship among domestic workers. The discontent of impoverished craftsmen led to machine breaking and bread riots. In 1832 - shortly after Hesse-Cassel joined the Zollverein - customs houses were attacked by craftsmen who feared the competition of

factory goods made in Prussia ... During the summer of 1844 some five thousand poverty-stricken linen and handloom weavers in Silesia attempted to sack both the factories and the mansions of the manufacturers. This unrest among the craftsmen was one of the factors which contributed to bring the revolutionary movement to a head in 1848."⁵⁶

It was indeed as Hobsbawm has termed it, "the age of revolution" and this accordingly must be emphasized as an important influence in the development of Marx's theory of social classes. However, it must be emphasized once again that the development of this theory was mainly confined to a philosophical approach which, although partially removed from the classical tradition of German idealism, was still largely devoid of any economic criteria. The specificity of the economic only evolves within Marx's work after the approach of philosophy had been transformed and rerouted from the development of the human mind to the material conditions of life. As Marx himself noted in the preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy in 1859,

"The first work which I undertook for a solution to the doubts which assailed me was a critical review of the Hegelian philosophy of Right ... My investigation led to the result that legal relations as well as forms of state are to be grasped neither from themselves nor from the so-called general development of the human mind, but rather have their roots in the material conditions of life, the sum total of which Hegel, following the example of the Englishmen and the Frenchmen of the eighteenth century, combined under the name of "civil society", that however, the anatomy of civil society is to be sought in political economy."⁵⁷

It is precisely to the anatomy of civil society as conceptualized by Marx that we now turn our attention. In doing so the following chapter will elucidate the development of the theory of social classes in Marx's writings during the period 1844-1852.

⁵⁶ W.O. Henderson, The Industrial Revolution on the Continent, (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1967), p.22.

⁵⁷ K. Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, (New York: International Publishers, 1970), p.20.

Marx's Theory of Social Classes 1844-1852

In the first chapter it was indicated how Marx's analysis, by beginning with a critique of Hegel, laid the foundation for a theory of social classes that would be based upon the development of modes of production rather than modes of consciousness. Although the concept "mode of production" was not formally introduced until 1845 in the German Ideology, the prerequisite for its development was a philosophical problematic that focused upon man's material existence and the constant social struggle that material existence presupposed at least within the context of class divided social formations. It was precisely through the gradual reconstruction or inversion of the Hegelian dialectic that Marx was able to develop the theme of class conflict and the dialectical interdependence that existed among social classes following the formal separation of civil and political society.

The culmination of these first speculative insights into the role and nature of social classes led to Marx's endorsement of the proletariat as the universal class, emphasizing in opposition to Hegel that the process of emancipation and transcendence must originate and be carried out by an agency of civil society rather than by an agency associated with the state. But, as Ralph Miliband has pointed out, "Marx's early formulations of the 'role' and 'mission' of the proletariat as an agent of emancipation do undoubtedly have a fairly heavy Hegelian imprint, with the proletariat almost occupying in the unfolding of history the role which Hegel had assigned to the Idea."¹

However, as Miliband goes on to suggest,

"But even in these early formulations, there is in Marx and Engels a concept of the proletariat as destined to become a revolutionary class because revolution is its only means of deliverance from the oppression, exploitation and alienation which existing society imposes upon it. These features of existing society are inherent to it, an intrinsic part of this social order, and can therefore only be got rid of by the disappearance of the social order itself. From this point of view, the proletariat's role is

¹R. Miliband, Marxism and Politics, (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1977). p.39.

not determined by any extra-historical agency: it is determined by the nature of capitalism and by the concrete conditions which it imposes upon the working class and upon society at large."²

Thus Marx's theory of social classes must be understood and analyzed within the context of the development of his theory of capitalist society; the two cannot be separated. For above all else the concept of social class represented for Marx a historical relationship involving the lives of real men and women, and the complex interrelationships that developed within capitalist society between social consciousness and social structure. It is precisely the interplay between human activity or praxis and social structure that constitutes the link between Marx's theories of social class and capitalist society.

In order to analyze this linkage systematically, this chapter will attempt to synthesize the relevant aspects of Marx's work from 1844-1852 beginning with the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts and ending with The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte. Rather than treating the works of this period from a textual, developmental perspective, we will instead pursue a thematic form of analysis that elucidates the various component parts of the conceptual apparatus developed by Marx to analyze social classes in capitalist society. By adopting such an approach this chapter will develop a conceptual framework that can be utilized as a basis for comparing this work with Marx's later writings in the period 1852-1875 which will be the subject matter to be dealt with in chapter three.

In analyzing the various component parts that are involved in Marx's theory of social classes it is important to begin from a historical perspective by briefly focusing on how the concept of

²Ibid., p.39.

class was used generally in the first part of the nineteenth century and how this general usage affected Marx's work: According to Asa Briggs,

"The concept of social class with all its attendant terminology was a product of the large scale economic and social changes of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Before the rise of modern industry writers on society spoke of ranks, orders and degrees when they wished to direct attention to particular economic groupings of interests. The word class was reserved for a number of people banded together for educational purposes or more generally with reference to subdivisions in schemes of classification."³

However, the terms rank, order, and degree were not completely separated from the term class. There was a certain amount of overlap and interchangeability which in part reflected the process of transition from a feudal to a capitalist mode of production. Thus, in Adam Ferguson's Essay on the History of Civil Society (1767) and John Millar's A Historical View of the English Government (1787), one finds that the concepts 'class' and 'rank' are used interchangeably to account for the differences of wealth, power, authority and prestige that existed among the various groupings which combined made up the social structure.⁴

This overlap between rank, order, social position and class became less prevalent as the industrial revolution began to make its presence felt in every facet of social life including in particular the old agrarian order. As Dahrendorf points out,

"In the emerging industrial society, rank and social position gave way to much cruder distinctions. As capital, property became transformed from a symbol of rank to an instrument of power growing steadily in strength and effectiveness. Much as nobility and small independent peasant might resent it, both became witnesses and victims of the disappearance of an old and the emergence of a new social order, before which all well tried categories of understanding and explanation failed."⁵

³Asa Briggs, "The Language of Class in Early 19th Century England", in A. Briggs and J. Saville, editors, Essays in Labour History, (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1960), p.43.

⁴R. Dahrendorf, Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1959). pp.4-5.

⁵Ibid., p.5.

With the advent of these massive changes, both the internal constitution of social groupings and the relationships between social groupings also underwent significant changes. Thus, while it had once been possible for writers such as Cobbett and Sauthey to speak of "the chain of connection between rich and poor" as well as "the bond of attachment", which implied relations of mutual obligation and "gentle slopes of social graduations", these connections were soon viewed quite differently and more frequently in terms of what Thomas Carlyle called "the cash nexus" which itself symbolized the negation of many of the former bonds of attachment.⁶

Yet, in trying to articulate the wherefore and the why of these changes, various writers of different ideological persuasions endowed the concept of class with a variety of meanings. In Charles Hall's major work The Effects of Civilization on the People in European States (1805) the concept of class was utilized in terms of the results rather than the causes of class formation: "The people in a civilized state may be divided into different orders; but for the purposes of investigating the manner in which they enjoy or are deprived of the requisites to support the health of their bodies and minds, they need only be divided into two classes, the rich and the poor."⁷

Perhaps a more satisfactory depiction of class was that given by Cobbett in 1825 (a year after the revoking of the Combination Act which had forbid the organization of trade unions in England) which again focused upon the results rather than the causes of class formation, but more importantly did so in terms of class organization and class conflict:

"They [working men] combine to effect a rise in wages. The masters combine against them. One side complains of the other, but neither knows the cause of the turmoil and the turmoil goes on. The different trades combine, and call their combination a General Union so that here is one class of society united to oppose another class."⁸

⁶Asa Briggs, Op.Cit., pp.45-47.

⁷C. Hall, "The Effects of Civilization on the People in European States" (London, 1805), in Asa Briggs, Op.Cit., p.3.

⁸Ibid., p.47 (no citation given for Cobbett's quote).

There were on the other hand a number of writers who formulated their conceptions very much in terms of the factors which produce social classes. For example, in W.A. Mackinnon's work, On the Rise and Progress and Present State of Public Opinion in Great Britain and Other Parts of the World (1828) we find not "the bond of attachment" but "the property connection" established as the fundamental determination of social classes:

"The only means by which the classes of society can be defined in a community where the laws are equal is from the amount of property, either real or personal possessed by individuals. As long as freedom and civilization exist property is so entirely the only power that no other means or choice is left of distinguishing the several classes than by the amount of property belonging to the individuals of which they are formed."⁹

Although this conception focused upon the amount rather than the type or form of property, it represented a vast improvement and a much closer approximation to existing class structure than had the traditional dichotomies of rich and poor or privileged and unprivileged.¹⁰

The terms "working class" and "middle class" also began to enter into the discussions of social theory in the first two decades of the nineteenth century. As Asa Briggs has pointed out, the former (first coined by Robert Owen in 1813) was mainly a descriptive rather than an analytic term, while the latter (still interchangeable with 'middle rank') was intended to demonstrate "the special role of the middle class in society" as well as their "common economic interests".¹¹

⁹ W.A. Mackinnon, On the Rise and Progress and Present State of Public Opinion in Great Britain and Other Parts of the World, (London: 1928), p.2. in Asa Briggs, Op. Cit., p.57.

¹⁰ This is not to suggest that social divisions had not been perceived by earlier writers in very similar terms. In fact, as Stanislaw Ossowski has pointed out, both Adam Smith (still using the old term order) and James Madison depicted the existence of orders, classes, or interests in terms of specific forms of property that such groups possessed. Thus Smith analyzed society in terms of three basic classes (those who lived by the profit of stock, by the rent of land, and those whose source of livelihood was wages) while Madison employed a 'multi-divisional perception of class structure' which included 'a landed interest, a manufacturing interest, a mercantile interest, a moneyed interest, with many other interests': S. Ossowski, Class Structure in the Social Consciousness, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967) pp.58-62.

¹¹ A. Briggs, Op.Cit., pp.52-54.

On the other hand, attempts were made to utilize the concept of class in a more analytic fashion by deriving its meaning from the specific nature of capitalist society itself. Thus in the work of the so-called 'Ricardian Socialists' such as William Thompson the existence of classes and the persistence of class conflict was bound up with the laws of value upon which the capitalist system was founded.

The premises of such a theory were derived from the writings of the classical political economists and are well summarized by G.D.H. Cole in the following terms:

"If labour was a 'commodity' and the value of commodities depended on the amount of labour embodied in them, the 'value of labour' must depend on the amount of labour it took to make and maintain a labourer. Its value was simply the value of the commodities the labourer needed to consume in order to do his work and reproduce his kind. Thus the labourer was receiving his due remuneration if his wage sufficed for these purposes; and he could not, the classical economists held, receive more than this because the very laws of economic equilibrium forbade it. This view was reinforced by the second contention, associated mainly with Malthus, that population had a natural tendency to increase up to the very limit of the available means of subsistence. If this was accepted, it followed that any tendency of real wages to rise above the subsistence level on account of demand for labour exceeding supply would soon be counteracted by an increase in the supply of workers."¹²

This being the case, and because labour was held to be the source of exchange value the Ricardian Socialists maintained that the labourer was being robbed of the fruits of his labour and forced into an inhuman situation. Thus the existence of classes and class conflict was bound up with the capitalist system itself which required the latter's replacement in one way or another if the confrontation between labour and capital was to be ended. That these views in turn were not simply confined to academic debate but constituted a real determinant of class consciousness due to their wide dispersal among the working class was attested to by J.S. Mill in 1831:

¹² G.D.H. Cole, Socialist Thought: The Forerunners 1789-1850, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1953), pp.106-107.

"Nothing can be conceived more mischievous than the doctrines which have been preached to the common people. The illicit cheap publications in which the doctrine of the right of the labouring people, who say they are only producers, to all that is produced, is very generally preached, superseding the Sunday newspapers and every other channel through which the people might get better information."¹³

However, the emergence and usage of the concept of class, like the emergence of classes and class structures themselves, exhibited notable differences in many countries. The discussion to this point has focused primarily on the British experience and it must be kept in mind that in other countries such as Germany where the thrust of industrialization was not to take hold until the 1850's and 60's, the concept of class was used quite differently. Even with the freeing of serfs, the gradual break up of the guild system, the campaign for free internal trade, and the founding of the Zollverein, the German class structure was one characterized by an underdeveloped bourgeoisie and a working class where in 1848 factory workers constituted only 4.2% of the total male population of Prussia over fourteen years of age, and only 12.5% of the total working class, itself a minority in relation to the predominance of the peasantry.¹⁴ It is not suprising then that with the exception of Marx and a small group of radicals, the common designation of class in Germany was the traditional term "stand" meaning status or estates,¹⁵

At the same time the concept class itself was laden with conceptual difficulties. Its defining characteristics were more descriptive than analytic and were frequently changed and shuffled about. As Professor Ossowski has pointed out, dichotomic conceptions of class structure, as well as functional and gradation conceptions, were often used together or in different combinations with the resulting overlap

¹³Quoted in Asa Briggs, Op.Cit., p.64. (no citation for Mill's quote given).

¹⁴P.H. Noyes, Organization and Revolution: Working Class Associations in the German Revolutions of 1848-49, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966). p.21.

¹⁵A brief discussion of the evolution of class terminology in Germany is provided in Ralf Dahrendorf, Op.Cit., pp.6-7. A good summation of the position of the German working class and its composition is to be found in P.H. Noyes, Op.Cit., pp.15-35.

often times causing terminological and more importantly theoretical inconsistencies and ambiguities.¹⁶ This was particularly evident, for example, in the work of Henri Saint Simon, the leading French 'Utopian socialist' of the 1830's whose conception and specification of the concept class seemed to change at random in his writings. As one of his interpreters put it so well,

"In its details as contrasted with its generality Saint Simon's theory of social classes is annoyingly fluid. He juggled his specific class categories every few years and switched his nomenclature almost at random. There is no single theory or terminology to unify the works spanning a quarter of a century and any attempt to fashion a monolithic construct of them ... must end in failure. His variant theories of social classes have a history of their own which must be recognized to make sense out of his writings."¹⁷

Given this historical perspective and given the nature of the various developments and difficulties associated with the various theories of class, it is not suprising to find that Marx assimilated some of the innovations and some of the problems. Because of the loose usage that class was subjected to in this period there arose important conceptual difficulties in Marx's work that have to be taken into account for the period under investigation.

To begin with the usage of class in Marx's work between 1844-52 was somewhat ambiguous and produced what at first appears as a series of contradictions: The most common usage of class that seems to run through Marx's work in this period is based primarily on economic criteria; on the ownership and nonownership of the means of production which is linked to the concept of the social division of labour. According to such criteria the proletariat constitutes a class in that it owns nothing and has only its labour to sell as a commodity on the market. Class becomes in this instance associated with wage-labour, with all wage labourers making up the proletariat

¹⁶ For a discussion of the sociological relevance and historical development of these three conceptions of class structure see S. Ossowski, *Op.Cit.*, pp19-69.

¹⁷ Frank E. Manuel, *The New World of Henri Saint Simon*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956). p.245.

or working class, two terms used interchangeably by both Marx and Engels. Similar criteria are applied to the bourgeoisie, the landlords, the petty-bourgeoisie and the peasantry, who constitute separate classes on the basis of the form and the quantity of the means of production that they own or control.¹⁸

However, in many of the works where the economic criteria appears, there are also to be found both definitions and usages of class that involve political, ideological and cultural determinants. The presence of the extra-economic determinants in both the conceptual definition and usage of the concept class is associated with the distinction Marx made between class in itself and class for itself.

"Economic conditions had first transformed the mass of the people of the country into workers. The combination of capital has created for this mass a common situation, common interests. This mass is thus already a class as against capital; but not yet for itself. In the struggle of which we have noted only a few phases this mass becomes united and constitutes itself as a class for itself. But the struggle of class against class is a political struggle."¹⁹

This distinction between class in itself and class for itself not only involves the element of class consciousness but also involves a conception of class conflict or competition. Marx makes this point clear in the German Ideology when he suggested "The separate individuals form a class only insofar as they have to carry on a common battle against another class; otherwise they are on hostile terms with each other as competitors."²⁰

Finally, in The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, in his

¹⁸ Examples of this usage of the economic criteria can be found in the following citations: 1. F. Engels, Principles of Communism (1847) in Marx & Engels, Selected Works, Vol.1, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1973), pp.81,82,88,92. 2. Marx & Engels, The Holy Family, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1956), p.15,35. 3. K.Marx, The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts (1844) in Marx & Engels, Collected Works, Vol.3, (New York: International Publishers, 1975), p.241. 4. Marx & Engels, German Ideology (Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1962), pp.45,492. 5. Marx & Engels, The Communist Manifesto, Selected Works, Vol.1 (Moscow: Progress Pub., 1956), pp.114,119.

¹⁹ K. Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy (1847), (New York: International Publishers 1969), p.173.

²⁰ K. Marx & F. Engels, The German Ideology (1845), (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1962), p.69.

discussion of the peasantry, Marx provides his most complete definition of the concept social class which demonstrates economic, political, ideological and cultural criteria.

"In so far as millions of families live under economic conditions of existence that separate their mode of life, their interests and their culture from those of the other classes and put them in hostile opposition to the latter, they form a class. In so far as there is merely a local interconnection among these small holding peasants and the identity of their interests begets no community, no national bond, and no political organization among them, they do not form a class."²¹

The problem associated with these various definitions and the emphasis that is to be attributed to the political, economic, ideological or cultural factors emerges at both the theoretical and empirical levels of analysis.*

This can be seen to be the case in Marx's work where the concepts class, fractions of classes, strata and other terms at times appear to be readily interchangeable. For example, in The Class Struggle in France, Marx speaks at one point of only four classes: the bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeoisie, the peasantry and the proletariat.²² However, in other places he also identifies tenant farmers as a class,²³ weavers as a class,²⁴ manufacturers as a class,²⁵ and the lumpen proletariat as a class²⁶. The peasantry, which was referred to in the above case as constituting a class, is in other places defined as not being a class²⁷, as being part of the "middle strata"²⁸, as being a class

²¹ K. Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (1852), (New York: International Publishers, 4th ed., 1968), pp.123-124.

²² K. Marx, The Class Struggle in France (1850) in K. Marx & F. Engels, Selected Works, Vol.1, Op.Cit., pp.233-234.

²³ K. Marx, Economic & Philosophic Manuscripts, Op.Cit., p.264.

²⁴ K. Marx & F. Engels, The German Ideology, Op.Cit., p.71.

²⁵ K. Marx, Wage Labour and Capital (1849), (London: Lawrence & Wishall, 1938), p.24.

²⁶ K. Marx & F. Engels, The Communist Manifesto, Op.Cit., p.118.

²⁷ K. Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, Op.Cit., pp.123-4.

²⁸ K. Marx, The Class Struggles in France, Op.Cit., p.221

*The problems associated with Marx's usage of class may be partly associated with the translation of his work from German. The question of translation is important and due to my unfamiliarity with German, I can only suggest the existence of such a problem in passing.

within "the middle strata of bourgeois society"²⁹ as being part of the lower middle class,³⁰ and as being part of the "lower strata of the middle class".³¹ The lumpen proletariat, which was referred to in the above case as a class, is also referred to as a "mass" instead of a class and in another context as part of the "middle strata".³²

The petty bourgeoisie, which was referred to in the first instance as a class, is also used as being part of the "middle strata"³³ and as being one of the "semi-bourgeois classes".³⁴ Certain elements of the petty bourgeoisie such as shopkeepers and pawnbrokers are also referred to as being part of the "other portions of the bourgeoisie",³⁵ while the same shopkeepers as well as small trades people and retired tradesmen are referred to as being part of the "lower strata of the middle class".³⁶ Similarly, handicraftsmen are considered at different times as being working class, as being part of the petty bourgeoisie,³⁷ or as being part of the "lower strata of the middle class".³⁸

Similar confusions emerge when the capitalist class is taken into consideration. The manufacturers or industrialists are sometimes referred to as a separate class³⁹ or as a separate "fraction" or "portion" of the bourgeois class,⁴⁰ or combined together with other

²⁹ Ibid., p.227

³⁰ Marx & Engels, The Communist Manifesto, Op.Cit., p.117.

³¹ Ibid., p.115

³² K. Marx, The Class Struggle in France, Op.Cit., p.221

³³ Ibid., p.221

³⁴ Ibid., p.270

³⁵ K. Marx & F. Engels, The Communist Manifesto, Op.Cit., p.115

³⁶ Ibid., p.215

³⁷ K. Marx, The Class Struggle in France, Op.Cit., p.230

³⁸ K. Marx & F. Engels, The Communist Manifesto, Op. Cit., p.115

³⁹ K. Marx, Wage Labour and Capital, Op.Cit., p.24

⁴⁰ K. Marx, The Class Struggle in France, Op.Cit., p.271

groups to make a combined 'faction' of the bourgeois class.⁴¹ In the same way the representatives of landed property were conceived by Marx to constitute a separate class⁴² or a faction of the bourgeois class,⁴³ or as being combined in a single capitalist class where fractions are not mentioned.⁴⁴

These examples that we have cited give rise to a number of questions and a number of problems that cannot simply be ignored. For example, what is the criteria Marx uses in determining who belongs to what class? It is very questionable whether the definition of class offered in the Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte could ever be reconciled with the six different usages that Marx makes of the peasantry, and at the same time it is hard to imagine the same criteria of class being applied to the lumpen proletariat or the petty bourgeoisie. The presence of ambiguity in the conception of strata or factions of classes makes it difficult to come to grips with how these strata or factions interact in the course class struggle and how in terms of the balance of class forces within a given social formation class power becomes translated into political power.

These are not simply objections made from the standpoint of stratification theory where the placing and rank ordering of individuals according to such criteria as income or education is presented as the key to conceptualizing social structure. These are real problems that have a bearing on both the development of theory and on actual practice and strategies for social change.⁴⁵

However, one must avoid the temptation of dismissing Marx's theory of classes on the basis of the problems that these conceptual ambiguities raise. Such an approach, besides representing an over-

⁴¹ Ibid., p.251

⁴² K. Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, Op.Cit., p.269

⁴³ K. Marx, The Class Struggle in France, Op.Cit., p.251

⁴⁴ K. Marx, The Economic And Philosophic Manuscripts, Op.Cit., p.265

⁴⁵ For further more detailed specification of the ambiguities in Marx's terminology involving class see B. Ollman, "Marx's Concept of Class", American Sociological Review, (Vol.73, 1967-68).

simplification of the problem also tends to separate Marx's theory of classes from his theory of capitalism thus avoiding the analysis of the important connections that bind the two together.⁴⁶

A more serious and scholarly approach to this question of the implications that arise from these ambiguities in Marx's work has been offered by Stanislaw Ossowski. Ossowski suggests that Marx treated classes in different ways depending on the purposes of his analysis by using three different models. At times he employs a dichotomic model to illustrate the fundamental antagonism between exploiting or exploited classes. In such a model wage labour and capital are posited as the fundamental antagonists with other 'middle bourgeois classes' as well as the peasantry tending to disappear. In a second model, which Ossowski terms "the pattern of gradation", Marx uses different criteria such as size or form of property to illustrate the various layers that make up the class structure. In such a model the peasantry and petty bourgeois become different stratas or factions of the middle class and their relations are defined by economic, ideological and political criteria. In the third model that Marx uses, functional criteria are applied. Thus, for example, there emerges in Marx the 'ideological classes' whose class position is largely determined by the function of producing ideologies for or against the dominant class.⁴⁷ Ossowski concludes that the mixing of these three schemes together "involves certain conceptual complications which are more than a matter of terminology".⁴⁸ The primary weakness arises in that Marx, in trying to show class struggle as the motive force of history, had to synthesize these various approaches and at the same time keep them consistent with the dominant theme of class struggle. This resulted in the numerous overlaps and contradictions that are to be found in his various models of analysis.⁴⁹

⁴⁶For an example of such an approach see R.N. Carew-Hunt, The Theory and Practice of Communism, (Middlesex, Eng.:Penguin Books), pp.64-67.

⁴⁷Marx's reference to 'ideological classes' appears only in Capital. However, in terms of the 1844-52 period his discussion of the ruling class in the German Ideology seems to imply a similar functional model of class. This will be discussed later in this chapter.

⁴⁸S. Ossowski, Op.Cit., p.78

While Ossowski's interpretation helps to explain part of the problem, he treats Marx in an overly analytic fashion and in doing so tends to dismiss the various levels on which Marx was operating in developing his theory of social classes. For example, in the 1844-52 period that we are dealing with, Marx at times presents his theory of social classes at a very broad and general level of abstraction in dealing with the developmental tendencies within the capitalist mode of production on a world wide basis. At other times he focuses on specific social formations such as France during the reign of Louis Phillipe between 1830 and 1848 and in doing so focuses on the existence and relations between six or seven different class groupings. At other times he focuses on a specific conjuncture such as the coup of Louis Bonaparte and focuses on class relations at that specific moment in time. Therefore, to interpret Marx's theory of social classes is to analyze them according to the specific level of abstraction that Marx is utilizing. This does not preclude the presence of certain conceptual ambiguity given the generally loose usage that class was subjected to at this time. However, to assess and analyze Marx's theory of social classes by specifying the level of analysis that is involved will greatly assist in determining how these conceptual ambiguities affect Marx's theoretical conclusions and at the same do justice to the work itself by dealing with it in its own terms. It is to this task that we now turn our attention.

An understanding of Marx's theory of social classes begins at a very general level of analysis with his conception of man in society. For Marx, man is inherently a social being, a being whose wants and needs cannot be analyzed much less understood outside of society. As he and Engels were found to express it,

⁴⁹ The central argument that Ossowski presents is to be found in chapter five entitled "The Marxian Synthesis". For a critique of this perspective, which I have in part adopted, and for an interesting analysis of Marx's theory of social classes that emphasizes the "Framework of Dialectical Materialism" see T. Dos Santos, "The Concept of Social Classes", Science & Society, (Vol. 34 #2 1970)

"The members of civil society are not atoms. The specific property of the atom is that it has no properties and is therefore not connected with beings outside it by any relations determined by its own natural necessity. The atom has no needs, it is self-sufficient; the world outside it is absolute vacuum, ie., it is contentless, senseless, meaningless, just because the atom has all its fullness in itself."⁵⁰

For Marx, man cannot be viewed as "squatting outside the world", nor can he be considered as a merely passive being, existing like a Robinson Crusoe figure for and by himself. Man is an active being who interacts with the world by both internalizing and objectifying himself, thus becoming a part of his external reality. In doing so he plays an active part in a multiplicity of social relations.

This initial conception of man led Marx to assert that "the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations."⁵¹ According to this conception, man enters into these social relations as an active force, he establishes them and alters them, but always in connection with other men and women and always under specific historically defined conditions. As Marx points out,

"The social structure and the state are continually evolving out of the life process of definite individuals, but of individuals not as they appear in their own or other people's imagination, but as they really are; ie., as they operate, produce materially and hence as they work under definite material limits, presuppositions and conditions independent of their will."⁵²

But in order for these social relations to be produced, man must produce and reproduce himself, his own life, and that of his species. For this reason, Marx maintains that men must first create their material life and always within a specific historically conditioned form of physical organization. Accordingly, the social relations that man enters are in the first instance those that enjoin him with nature. Man's relationship with nature concerns or involves his transforming

⁵⁰ K. Marx & F. Engels, The Holy Family, (1844), pp. 162f. quoted in H. Selsam & H. Martel, Reader in Marxist Philosophy, (New York: International Publishers, 1971), pp. 310-311.

⁵¹ K. Marx, "Theses on Feurbach" (1845), in F. Engels, Ludwig Feurbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy, (New York: International Publishers, 1970), pp. 83-84.

and moulding nature through a process of productive activity. Productive activity or labour is thus the essential mediation that connects man and nature.

This three-fold interacting process involving man, nature and productive activity implies much more than an assessment of man's biological nature. Marx is emphatic on this point and in the following passage he indicates how man's productive activity is essentially distinguishable from that of animals, thus demonstrating an important reason why man has a distinctly human nature or species-being.

"In creating an objective world by his practical activity, in working up inorganic nature, man proves himself a conscious species being, ie., as a being that treats itself as a species being ... Admittedly animals also produce. They build themselves nests, dwellings ... But an animal only produces what it immediately needs for itself and its young. It produces one-sidedly, whilst man produces universally. It produces only under the dominion of immediate physical need, whilst man produces even when he is free from physical need and only truly produces in freedom therefrom. An animal reproduces only itself, whilst man reproduces the whole of nature. An animal's product belongs immediately to its physical body, whilst man freely confronts his product. An animal forms things in accordance with the standard and the need of the species to which it belongs, whilst man knows how to produce in accordance with the standards of every species, and knows how to apply everywhere the inherent standard to the object. Man, therefore, also forms things in accordance with the laws of beauty."⁵³

Thus for Marx man's productive activity, his labour, is much more than mere instinctual activity. Man consciously conceives and performs his labour, thus performing the dual functions of conception and execution.⁵⁴

For Marx, man is endowed with the capacity of conceptual thought, which is also a social product because language itself is inherently social. At the same time the faculties that man possesses such as hearing, tasting, seeing, thinking, smelling, loving, etc., are also

⁵² K. Marx & F. Engels, The German Ideology (1845), Op.Cit., p.37.

⁵³ K. Marx, The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts in H. Selsam & H. Martel, Op.Cit., p.300.

⁵⁴ These two terms, while not mentioned explicitly by Marx, are implicit in all his discussions of man's 'species activity'. The actual terms we have used here are taken from H. Braverman, Labour & Monopoly Capital, (London & New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974), pp.46/51.

of a social nature in that they develop within specific historically conditioned social relations. Thus, as Bertal Ollman has pointed out, Marx perceives man's relation to the world both socially and historically in terms of three interrelated processes: perception, which is what in fact brings man into contact with nature; orientation, which refers to the way in which man comprehends this contact; and appropriation which is mediated by activity and refers to the purposes that man makes of this contact with nature in the process of satisfying his needs.⁵⁵

At the same time, because man has the ability to exercise his human facilities and powers to satisfy his basic needs, he at the same time creates new needs as well in order to improve upon his material and social existence. These new needs which are, according to Marx, experienced as an "inner necessity" do not arise out of a void. They are a product of particular socio-historical formations and must be understood in terms of the structure of the social relations contained therein. Such an understanding is necessary because the nature or character of these newly created needs are for the most part defined in terms of how they arise and how they can be satisfied which presupposes once again a form of social organization as well as a certain level of what Marx called productive forces.

It is because man's learning process and developmental capacity is one characterized by praxis, that is the unity of perception and activity, conception and execution that Marx maintained that the nature of man's needs cannot be understood outside of the specific historically conditioned form in which they arise and are satisfied. This same conception applies to all aspects of man's existence which for Marx must be considered as a totality of social relations.

This very brief introduction to Marx's concept of man in society is obviously in need of further elaboration for it brings into question

⁵⁵ B. Ollman, Alienation: Marx's Conception of Man in Capitalist Society (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), p. 97.

a number of ontological and epistemological issues that require further detailed specification. However, it serves the purposes of this paper in that it can be used as a point of reference for discussing Marx's theory of alienation in terms of class exploitation, a topic which will be discussed later in this chapter. And it serves as well as a point of departure for the three factors which were utilized as the criteria for the development of Marx's theory of social classes. These three factors, the economic, the political and the ideological are intimately related in Marx's theory but will be treated separately here and then synthesized when the analysis is complete. Since Marx maintained that the dynamic of the system was primarily connected with the way in which men produce and reproduce their material existence, the analysis logically begins with the relations between economy and class and the process these relations initiate which Marx termed "the subsuming of individuals under definite classes".⁵⁶

Economy and Class

As Maurice Dobb has pointed out,

"Marx sought the essence of capitalism neither in a spirit of enterprise nor in the use of money to finance a series of exchange transactions with the object of gain, but in a particular mode of production. By mode of production he did not refer merely to the state of technique - to what he termed the state of productive forces - but to the way in which the means of production were owned and to the social relations between men which resulted from their connections with the process of production. Thus capitalism was not simply a system of production for the market - a system of commodity production as Marx termed it - but a system under which labour power had itself become a commodity and was bought and sold on the market like any other object of exchange."⁵⁷

The concept mode of production is important in that it represents the

⁵⁶ K. Marx & F. Engels, The German Ideology, Op.Cit., p.94

⁵⁷ Maurice Dobb, Studies in the Development of Capitalism, 2nd ed., (New York: International Publishers, 1963), p.7.

unity of the relations and forces of production, a unity out of which the contradictions between wage labour and capital are generated and acted upon in the form of class antagonisms and class struggle which Marx and Engels both posited as the dynamic necessary for progress.⁵⁸ Although both Marx and Engels claimed at one point or another that the division of labour was responsible for the emergence and perpetuation of class divisions, the division of labour itself operates in different ways depending on the specific mode of production itself. Thus, for example, it is only within the capitalist mode of production that we find both an advanced social division of labour (within society) as well as an advanced form of the technical division of labour (within the workshop).

Thus the role and nature of social classes can only be understood in connection with the mode of production that they are associated with. And an understanding of the specific qualities that adhere to a specific mode of production begins first with an understanding of the production process itself. According to Marx,

"In the process of production, human beings work not only upon nature but also upon one another. They produce only by working together in a specified manner by reciprocally exchanging their activities. In order to produce, they enter into definite connection and relations to one another, and only within these social conditions and relations does their influence upon nature operate, i.e., does production take place."⁵⁹

What this suggests is that the production process is itself constituted by two relationships which while appearing as one must be viewed as analytically separate in order to distinguish the various historical epochs. First, there is what we may call the labour process where man acts upon nature, upon its raw materials with specific instruments of production in order to produce and thus appropriate specific goods and services. However, before the labour process can begin the labourer must be united with the means of production, both the instruments he is to utilize and the raw materials and other

⁵⁸ See for example K. Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy, Op. Cit., p.61.

⁵⁹ K. Marx, Wage Labour and Capital, Op. Cit., p.28.

forms he is to operate upon.⁶⁰ This is what Marx is referring to in the above passage when he stated that production only takes place when men enter into "definite connection and relations to one another". The essential connection or relation of production that brings the worker and the object of labour together is the property relationship which in the capitalist mode of production involves the capitalist owning the means of production thus endowing him with the power to set the labourer to work and by virtue of his ownership, to appropriate and control the products that are produced.

The labourer, on the other hand, by virtue of the fact that he does not own any of the means of production, must enter the production process in order to receive the wage that allows him to buy those goods and services necessary for his own reproduction and that of his family. He does this by selling his labour which thus becomes a commodity like any other which is exchangeable for another commodity on the market.⁶¹

It is precisely this relationship of ownership and non-ownership of the means of production that sets the labour process in motion. And it is in reference to this relationship that Marx points out, "The existence of a class which possesses nothing but the ability to work is a necessary presupposition of capital.... Capital therefore presupposes wage labour; wage labour presupposes capital. They condition each other; each brings the other into existence."⁶²

⁶⁰ Marx was aware of the two relationships that make up the production process, but often times he used different terminology to express it. Thus at times he refers to it as "the act of production" within the "labour process". See K. Marx, Economic & Philosophic Manuscripts, in H. Selsam & H. Martel, Op.Cit., p.299.

⁶¹ The term labour is used here instead of labour power because it was not until 1857 that Marx drew the important distinction between these two terms. In many editions of Wage Labour and Capital the actual term labour power appears, but this is only because Engels made the substitution in re-editing this work to bring it up to date with the theoretical advances made by Marx in the 1850's. Thus when this paper uses the term labour in a quotation from Wage Labour and Capital, the word power will be placed in brackets to indicate Engels' addition. For the importance of this distinction and its development see: Ernest Mandel, The Formation of the Economic Thought of Karl Marx, (London: Monthly Review Press, 1971), p.81.

⁶² K. Marx, Wage, Labour and Capital, Op.Cit., pp.30,32.

It is important to grasp this distinction between the two relationships that 'combine' to make up the production process in order to understand why, for Marx, the concept of social class is first and foremost the expression of a historical relationship. The very existence of wage labour presupposes those historical developments such as the enclosure movement, the end of serfdom and the influx of the peasantry into the cities and towns, the rise of manufacturing outside of guilds, the expansion of the world market, and a whole host of other factors that when viewed historically resulted in the emergence of a working class with nothing to sell but its labour.⁶³

Thus the relations of production as involving the ownership and non-ownership of the means of production, and the buying and selling of labour, emerge as the central factor in "the subsuming of individuals under class" in the capitalist mode of production (hereafter referred to as C.M.P.). However, this is taking the concept of relations of production in its narrowest usage. As Marx points out, "The relations of production in their totality constitute what is called the social relations, society and moreover a society at a definite stage of historical development, a society with a peculiar distinctive character."⁶⁴

These relations, or as Marx also called them, "social relations of production", refer to the entire multiplicity of social relations that men and women are engaged in. They are relations arising from the schools people attend, the stores they shop in, the communities they live in and the people they are engaged with as well as those that they are excluded from engaging with. This vast array of social relations, when taken in its totality, constitutes the social structure of society where according to Marx "all relations coexist and support one another".⁶⁵ Thus the subsumption of individuals under class is not

⁶³ This process of class formation and the factors that Marx stresses can be best understood by reading K. Marx, Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations, Hobsbawm, editor, (New York: International Publishers, 1975) pp. 121-39.

⁶⁴ K. Marx Wage Labour and Capital, Op.Cit., p.28

⁶⁵ K. Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy, Op.Cit., p.111.

just a process that occurs in the factory or workshop. These social relations of production or as Marx also terms them "modes of intercourse" are^{the} very expression of the existence of social classes and, as the section on ideology and class will demonstrate, are fundamentally important in the reproduction of class relationships, a process that involves the constant subsuming of individuals under class.

The capitalist mode of production (C.M.P.) like other modes of production is constituted not only by the relations of production (both broadly and narrowly defined) but also by the productive forces which must always be viewed and understood historically.

"It is superfluous to add that men are not free to choose their productive forces - which are the basis of their history, for every productive force is an acquired force, the product of former activity. The productive forces are therefore the result of practical human energy; but this energy is itself conditioned by the circumstances in which men find themselves, by the productive forces already acquired by the social form which exists before they do, which they do not create, which is the product of the preceding generation."⁶⁶

By productive forces Marx means much more than a form of techniques or a given level of technology. This is shown at one point when he refers to the working class as the most important productive force associated with the C.M.P.. Thus productive forces include both technique and technology as well as the forms of social organization that are inherited and adopted for improving social, material and spiritual existence. According to Marx, it is within the C.M.P. that these productive forces have attained their highest level of development, and, as will be shown, it is precisely for this reason that the relations of production within the C.M.P. are restrictive to the future growth of productive forces and that for this reason Marx envisaged the rise of the working class to power. Thus, while

⁶⁶ K.Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy, Op.Cit., p.181.

productive forces within the C.M.P. are largely responsible for keeping individuals subsumed under definite classes, these same productive forces represent the possibility for liberation and the abolition of social classes.

The C.M.P. then must be understood as involving relations of production, social relations of production and productive forces. However, the distinctive character of this mode of production emerges only when these three forms are understood as operating together in unity. This unity and its corresponding character appeared to Marx to have one overriding characteristic which is fundamental for understanding his theory of social classes. As he put it, "Bourgeois society is association founded on competition"⁶⁷

For Marx, the advent of competition was bound up with the processes involving the expansion of the market society. Its first precondition was the liberation of feudal serfs and after this its effects penetrated to every corner of the newly emerging society transforming all personal relations into monetary relations.

"The great revolution of society brought about by competition ... resolved relations of the bourgeois to one another and to the proletarians into purely monetary relations, and converted all the above-named "sanctified goods" into articles of trade; and ... destroyed for the proletarians all naturally derived and traditional relations, eg., family and political relations, together with their entire ideological superstructure..."⁶⁸

The capitalist mode of production thus becomes synonymous with the term "competitive mode of production" and its character increasingly is determined by the conditions necessary for the large scale production of commodities, which are in turn dictated by the market system itself.

⁶⁷ K. Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy Op.Cit., p.149

⁶⁸ K.Marx & F. Engels, The German Ideology, Op.Cit., p.417.

It should be noted that in the 1844-52 period the market has an overriding importance in Marx's work. As Martin Nicolaus has pointed out,

"Marx sees the market as the centre of gravity of bourgeois society;...he goes so far as to believe that a change in the market ... will produce a drastic change in the whole social structure. While this emphasis of the importance of the market cannot be discounted, Marx himself in his mature economic works came to see the market as a dependent variable, and he then identified capital accumulation and production as the real fulcrum around which all the other phenomena of bourgeois society gravitate."⁶⁹

Ernest Mandel, while suggesting that Marx's position began to change in Wage Labour and Capital, makes a similar argument pointing out its important implications in terms of the development of the labour theory of value. "To accept the labour theory of value is to establish that value is not determined by the laws of the market, but by factors imminent in production itself."⁷⁰ However, even though the market remains the central element and even though the value of a commodity is not yet conceived in terms of the amount of socially necessary labour required for its production, Marx was able to focus on the relations within and between classes on the basis of the effects competition produced in the formation and transformation of class relations and class struggle.⁷¹

In order to grasp the effects of competition in economic terms, Marx usually began his analysis by focusing on the bourgeoisie and then moving from there to view the effect upon the working class. Such a form of analysis is justified according to Marx because "the

⁶⁹ M. Nicolaus, "Proletariat and Middle Class in Marx: Hegelian Choreography and the Capitalist Dialectic," Studies on the Left, (#7, 1967), p. 31.

⁷⁰ E. Mandel, The Formation of the Economic Thought of Marx, Op.Cit., p. 48

⁷¹ As Mandel has pointed out, up until 1847 Marx and Engels tended to link the value of commodities to their price. In the Communist Manifesto they changed this position viewing the value of commodity in terms of the labour time necessary for its production. Only in 1857-58 is this position revised: E. Mandel, Op.Cit., pp. 47, 57.

bourgeoisie no longer appears as a special class, but as a class whose conditions of existence are those of the whole society."⁷²

Thus, the forms of response that the bourgeoisie adopts to the laws of competition constantly effect and alter the existence of the working class.⁷³

The most important effect that competition has on the individual capitalist is that it forces him to remain competitive by constantly revolutionizing the productive forces:

"While competition therefore constantly pursues him with its law of the cost of production and turns against him every weapon that he forges against his rivals, the capitalist continually seeks to get the best of competition by restlessly introducing further subdivisions of labour and new machines, which though more expensive, enable him to produce more cheaply instead of waiting until the new machines shall have been rendered obsolete by the competition."⁷⁴

This competition produces competitive relations within the capitalist class itself. The different fractions of capital (finance, commercial and industrial) have opposing economic interests that bring them into conflict with one another. And even within each fraction a struggle for survival and the domination of a larger share of the market takes place. However, Marx maintained that this competition within the capitalist class was partially resolved or mitigated in a five-fold manner.

In the first place the capitalist class is held together by its mutual class interests as expressed in terms of its opposition to the demands of the working class. Secondly, the state helps to unify

⁷²K.Marx & F.Engels, The German Ideology, Op.Cit., p.461.

⁷³This cannot of course be viewed as simply stimulus-response. Marx's analysis constantly refers to the fact that this relationship is mediated by the form the class struggle has adopted. This form itself is dependent on the balance of class forces and is clearly a decisive factor as Marx makes class in both The Class Struggle in France and in The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte. We have adopted our approach of treating each factor separately (political, economic, ideological) in order to specify how each factor operates and evolves. The synthesis produced at the end of this chapter entails how all these factors enter into the class struggle.

⁷⁴K.Marx, Wage Labour and Capital, Op.Cit., p.44

the capitalist class as a 'whole' by ensuring its domination of the working class (legal and coercive enforcement of property relations) and by assisting in providing those conditions that are beneficial for capitalist expansion. Thirdly, the dominant ideology helps to preserve a certain degree of cohesiveness among the respective members of the capitalist class. And, fourthly, competition itself leads to the centralization and concentration of capital into fewer and fewer hands so that the interests of the capitalist class tend to become more cohesive and comprehensive, although the competitive element always remains, sometimes latent sometimes manifest.

It is important to realize that Marx never maintained that the interests of the capitalist class as a whole are ever totally unified. We are still dealing with social classes at the highest level of abstraction and the characteristic form of class interests is something that can only be assessed within social formations at a given conjuncture of relations. Although we will be dealing with this question in the sections on ideology and politics, in relation to the economic the following passage is generally representative of Marx's position on the question of competition within the capitalist class.⁷⁵

"On the other hand, if all the members of the modern bourgeoisie have the same interests in as much as they form a class as against another class, they have opposite antagonistic interests in as much as they stand face to face with one another. This opposition of interests results from the economic conditions of their bourgeois life."⁷⁶

The development of homogeneity within the capitalist class develops quantitatively as the process of concentration and centralization develops, but consistently has to be reinforced by extra economic factors in order to ensure the unity of the class, particularly

⁷⁵ The point is also illustrated in the Communist Manifesto where Marx points out that a central strategy of the working class must be to take advantage of those divisions that exist within the bourgeois class: K.Marx & F.Engels, The Communist Manifesto, Op.Cit., p.119.

⁷⁶ K.Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy, Op.Cit., p.123.

during the course of class struggle itself. For Marx, it is precisely the competition that the market society generates which by leading to the concentration and centralization of capital also in the same process tends to eliminate those classes that are remnants of the feudal mode of production. The phenomenon of proletarianization and the emergence of a two class society is what Marx referred to in the Communist Manifesto as the "simplification of class antagonisms", and it is constantly utilized in the 1844-52 period to show how the forces generated within the C.M.P. are incompatible with the existence of former classes although the process of their decay is a gradual one.

"The lower strata of the middle class - the small tradespeople shopkeepers and retired tradesmen; generally the handicraftsmen and peasants - all these sink gradually into the proletariat, partly because their diminutive capital does not suffice for the scale on which industry is carried on, and is swamped in the competition with the large capitalists, partly because their specialized skill is rendered worthless by new methods of production. Thus the proletariat is recruited from all classes of the population,"⁷⁷

⁷⁷ K.Marx & F.Engels, The Communist Manifesto, Op.Cit., p.115. Other examples of Marx and Engels utilizing the two class model can be found in the following locations: F.Engels, The Principles of Communism, Op.Cit., pp.82,91; K.Marx & F.Engels, The Communist Manifesto, Op.Cit., pp.109,117; K.Marx, "On the Question of Free Trade" in Poverty of Philosophy, Op.Cit., p.216. These passages are mainly propositions that Marx and Engels derived from their preliminary analysis of the C.M.P., that is at the highest level of abstraction. In dealing with concrete cases of the existence of classes in France (Class Struggle in France (1850) and The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (1852)) Marx is focusing on a specific social formation and analyzing classes at different times during different conjunctures of relations. Thus, although he refers to them as 'transition classes' (peasantry and petty bourgeoisie), the analysis of their transitional nature is not simply ascribed to them by virtue of the tendencies of the C.M.P. itself! The specificity of their transitional nature emerges from Marx's analysis of how specific conjunctures of relations brought about, for example, the slow disintegration of the French petty bourgeoisie itself. See: K.Marx, The Class Struggles in France, p.209. This is an important example of why the levels of analysis that Marx uses must at all times be distinguished.

It should be noted that there is little or no evidence to suggest that with this so called two class model all social groupings thus become manual labourers in the factory. Rather the quote from the Communist Manifesto, p.111, concerning the transformation of lawyers, doctors, priests and scientists into paid wage labourers, when read within the context which it is written, concerns the elimination of their occupational status and relative autonomy vis a vis capital. Thus,

However, the fifth, and perhaps in Marx's opinion the most important factor why economic competition within the capitalist class becomes, to a certain extent, neutralized arises from the fact that the antagonistic effects that competition generates are largely displaced out of the capitalist class and into the working class. This is a very important dialectical conception that Marx developed in this period and deserves to be analyzed in some detail.

In a lecture given to a group of workers in 1843 concerning the issues involved on the question of free trade and how they related to the interests of the working class, Marx pointed out,

"The growth of productive capital implies the accumulation and concentration of capital. The centralization of capital involves a greater division of labour and a greater use of machinery. The greater division of labour destroys the skill of the labourer; and by putting in place of this skilled work labour which anyone can perform, it increases competition among workers."⁷⁸

What Marx was suggesting does not so much concern the social division of labour, but rather the technical division of labour within the workshop or factory. Marx recognized that the C.M.P. is unlike other modes of production for a number of reasons, one of the most important of which is that within other modes this technical division of labour is either nonexistent or very little developed. He suggests that in these previous modes of production the division of labour was largely fixed by custom, tradition or law. However, the C.M.P., in order to perpetuate its existence and because of the laws

the so called two class model that Marx supposedly reduces everything to must be treated at different levels of analysis and need not imply changing occupational structure, but rather the emergence of new relations of dependency and the corresponding alteration of economic class identification.

⁷⁸K.Marx, "On the Question of Free Trade", in K.Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy, Op.Cit., p.216. Because Marx was writing at a time when the technical division of labour was not far advanced, and because he was writing prior to the so-called 'great advances' in modern industrial management pioneered by Taylor and others, there has been a tendency to underestimate his theoretical understanding of the technical division of labour. This question will be discussed in chapter three in relation to the Grundrisse and Capital. But for clear evidence of his understanding of this process in the 1844-52 period, see: K.Marx, Wage Labour and Capital, Op.Cit., pp.44-47; K.Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy, Op.Cit., pp.127-144.

of competition, must constantly revolutionize the forces of production one of the most important of which is machinery itself. This whole process associated with the increasing technical division of labour has devastating consequences for the working class:

"Furthermore, to the same degree in which the division of labour increases, is the labour simplified. The special skill of the labourer becomes worthless. He becomes transformed into a simple monotonous force of production with neither physical or mental elasticity. His work becomes accessible to all; therefore competitors press upon him from all sides. Moreover, it must be remembered that the more simple, the more easily learned that the work is, so much the less is its cost of production, the expense of its acquisition."

This concept has a distinctly dialectical character, for Marx, because it is precisely this increasing technical division of labour which increases the capacity of the productive forces, introduces a system of authoritarian discipline within the workshop, and preserves the capitalist and the C.M.P. by reducing the cost of production; and it does this by forcing the workers to compete among themselves so that they won't become a part of the evergrowing reserve army of labour which this process itself creates.⁸⁰

"The greater division of labour enables one labourer to accomplish the work of five, ten or twenty labourers. It therefore increases competition among the labourers fivefold, tenfold or twentyfold. The labourers compete not only by selling themselves one cheaper than the other, but also by one doing the work of five then ten or twenty, and they are forced to compete in this manner by the division of labour which is introduced and steadily improved by capital."⁸¹

⁷⁹ K.Marx, Wage Labour and Capital, Op.Cit., p.43. Harry Braverman has suggested that it was Charles Babbage (1792-1871) who first formulated this relationship between the division of labour and the corresponding cheapening of labour power. Whether Marx derived this principle from Babbage is uncertain, although he does quote from him on several occasions during this period. See H. Braverman, Op.Cit., pp.79-82.

⁸⁰ For Marx's early position on the reserve army of labour which was to become an important theoretical construct in Capital, see K.Marx, Wage Labour and Capital, Op.Cit., pp.45-46. Marx's mention of the technical division of labour and the corresponding development of a discipline system within the factory is found in a quote taken by Marx from Dr.A.Ure, The Philosophy of Manufacture (London, 1835), found in K.Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy, Op.Cit., pp.40-41.

It is when this process is grasped with all its implications that one can see Marx's implicit conception of how the effects of competition are displaced outside of the capitalist class and into the working class. The results that this competition produces inhibits the proletariat from organizing itself into a class, a process discussed in detail by Marx and Engels in the Communist Manifesto. It is for this reason that Marx declared in speaking of the worker, "He competes against himself as a member of the working class."⁸²

Before turning to the relation between politics and class, one further important concept has to be dealt with, namely Marx's concept of class exploitation. This conception will be shown to be closely linked to a statement made by Marx in The German Ideology where he suggested that a careful analysis of the concept of ownership would reveal that "...owning would be found to be a full determinant, owning control over other people's labour."⁸³

During the 1844-52 period Marx began developing two conceptions of the meaning of class exploitation as it related specifically to the C.M.P.. The first deals with the theory of alienation and finds its clearest expression in his 1844 work, The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts. The second concerns his theory of absolute and relative immiseration which, in his 1849 work Wage Labour and Capital, led to his first speculative insights into the nature of what he later called the concept of surplus value. For Marx, class exploitation has social, political, economic and ideological implications, but here we shall be concerned mainly with the economic.

To begin with, Marx maintained that although individuals are exploited, and although it is individuals who experience the many varieties of alienation, the phenomenon of exploitation in capitalist

⁸¹ K. Marx, Wage and Labour Capital, Op.Cit., p.44.

⁸² Ibid., p.45

⁸³ K. Marx & F. Engels, The German Ideology, Op.Cit., p.225.

society must be understood in class terms. This is not simply an ontological or epistemological conception; it concerns the very nature of capitalist society itself. As Marx pointed out,

"To be a capitalist is to have not only a purely personal, but a social status in production. Capital is a collective product and only by the united action of many members, nay in the last resort, only by the united action of all members of society, can it be set in motion. Capital is therefore not a personal; it is a social power ... a social power capable of being monopolized."⁸⁴

This is the first meaning that Marx attributed to the previous statement, namely "full determinate ownership" is "control over other people's labour". Marx did not regard capital as an object but rather as "... a social relation of production. It is a bourgeois relation of production, a relation of bourgeois society. The means of subsistence, the instruments of labour, the raw materials of which capital consists - have ... been produced and accumulated under given social conditions, within definite social relations."⁸⁵

The multiplicity of actions and decisions that are required to set the production process in motion presupposes all those who buy and sell labour (power), a fact which is largely determined by the relations which have perpetuated a class which owns and controls the means of production and thus the labour (power) and the product of the labour of those who must sell their labour (power) as a commodity. Thus for Marx,

"The labourer belongs to neither an owner nor to the soil, but eight, ten, twelve, fifteen hours of his daily life belong to whomsoever buys them. The worker leaves the capitalist to whom he has sold himself, as often as he chooses, and the capitalist discharges him as often as he sees fit as soon as he no longer gets any use, or not the required use, out of him. But the worker whose only source of income is the sale of his labour (power) cannot leave the whole class of buyers; i.e., the capitalist class, unless he gives up his own existence. He does not belong to this or that capitalist, and it is for him to find his man, i.e., to find a buyer in the capitalist class."⁸⁶

⁸⁴ K. Marx & F. Engels, The Communist Manifesto, Op.Cit., p.121.

⁸⁵ K. Marx, Wage Labour and Capital, Op. Cit., p.29.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p.20.

Thus, to understand the massive inequality that is perpetuated under the guise of the formal equality and freedom surrounding the buying and selling of labour (power), one must begin, according to Marx, by recognizing that transactions within the system are regulated by the relations existing within and between classes.

The second condition required for understanding Marx's statement that "full determinate owning" is control over other people's labour concerns the reproduction of labour (power) within the context of class relations. This factor is derived from Marx's contention that the value of a commodity will depend on the cost of its production. This, Marx points out, depends on the amount of labour necessary to produce the commodity, on the raw materials used, on the wear and tear on machinery and tools and other such factors. This argument is followed by the suggestion that since labour (power) is also a commodity, its value will also depend on its cost of production. For Marx, this involves maintaining the labourer as a labourer, providing him with a certain amount of education and training, and also enough wages so that the reproduction of the labourer himself, as well as his family, the future generation of labourers is assured. But Marx points out that this process is the reproduction of classes as well as individuals, and for that matter not all individuals are reproduced.

"Thus the cost of production of simple labour (power) amounts to the cost of the existence and propagation of the worker. The price of the cost of existence and propagation constitutes wages. This minimum wage, like the determination of the price of commodities in general by the cost of production, does not hold good for the single individual but only for the race. Individual workers, indeed millions of workers, do not receive enough to be able to exist and propagate themselves; but the wages of the whole working class adjust themselves within the limits of their fluctuations to this minimum."⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Ibid., p.27.

What is important here is that for Marx the reproduction of labour is not simply the reproduction of individual workers, but involves the reproduction of the working class and their conditions of existence. Thus the first two meanings that may be attributed to the statement "full determinate owning" is "control over other people's labour" include: 1) control over labour to set the production process in motion. 2) control over the reproduction of labour so that the production process can continue over time to be set in motion.

It is precisely because the social power of capital has been monopolized by the capitalist class that the relations of exploitation that develop out of these forms of control must be understood not as relations between individuals but as relations between classes. It is for this reason that one could suggest that Marx's concept of social classes involves historical relationships that can only be understood through the utilization of social relational categories that embody the making and remaking of social structure and not its completion.

As Ernest Mandel has pointed out, it was in Wage Labour and Capital that Marx for the first time expressed or hinted at what was to become his theory of surplus value, a theory directly connected to his concept of class exploitation. Marx suggested that capital,

"...maintains and multiplies itself ... by means of its exchange for direct, living labour (power) The worker receives means of subsistence in exchange for his labour (power), but the capitalist receives in exchange for his means of subsistence labour, the productive activity of the worker, the creative power whereby the worker not only replaces what he consumes but gives to the accumulated labour a greater value than it previously possessed."⁸⁸

In Capital, Marx would develop the concepts of surplus value and surplus labour in an attempt to show how in fact class exploitation

⁸⁸ K. Marx, Wage, Labour and Capital, in Selected Works, Vol.1, p.161, in E. Mandel, Op.Cit., p.54.

can be measured in scientific terms. However, in Wage Labour and Capital and the other works of this period, his essential argument is similar to that of the Ricardian socialists: since capital was accumulated labour, the product of capital belonged to the working class and thus the working class was exploited because capital had appropriated unto itself the bulk of this accumulated labour.

Exploitation not only implied appropriation of accumulated labour by the capitalist class but also what resulted from this. In this respect Marx describes the anarchy that the competitive laws of the market society generate and how accordingly capital moves from one industry to another, resulting in overproduction and the continuous cycles of prosperity, overproduction, stagnation and crisis. The process itself dictates the necessity for the greater accumulation of capital and the revolutionizing of the productive forces which requires still greater use of machinery, resulting in the creation of what Marx was later to call "the reserve army of labour".⁸⁹

The anarchy created by the capitalist market society results, according to Marx, in both the absolute and relative impoverishment of the working class. These conceptions are summarized by Mandel in the following terms.

"In short, Marx and Engels still believed in a general law of long-term decline in wages - a position they were later to correct - and Marx defined this law in the Arbeitslohn manuscripts and in Wage Labour and Capital by the following features: the minimum wage in different countries is different, but it tends to equalize at the lowest level. When wages fall and then recover (in the phase of high conjuncture following that of depression) they never reach the level previously lost. Competition among the workers increases constantly and tends to lower the minimum wage; taxes and the deceptions practiced by tradesmen work in the same direction. In short, "in the course of time the workers' wages decline in a two-fold sense: first, relatively in comparison with the development of wealth generally; and second in the absolute sense, the sense that the amount of goods the worker receives in exchange becomes smaller and smaller."⁹⁰

⁸⁹ For Marx's analysis of these cyclic fluctuations, see K. Marx, "On the Question of Free Trade", Op.Cit., pp. 215-220.

⁹⁰ K. Marx, "Arbeitslohn" in Kleine Okonomische Schriften, pp. 223-24 in E. Mandel, Op.Cit., p. 59. This work that Mandel is quoting from comes from an unpublished manuscript that Marx wrote in Brussels in

Thus, the relations that have just been described constituted for Marx relations involving class exploitation at the economic level in that they are primarily the result of those conditions which give one class the dual control over the production and reproduction of labour (power).

The theory of exploitation also received another form in Marx's early work. Although this additional form combines extra economic factors, it may in part be treated at the economic level. This second theory of class exploitation has been referred to as Marx's theory of alienation. In the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, written in 1844, Marx for the first time developed the theory of alienation and the four categories that comprise it. These four categories consist of:

- 1) The alienation of the worker from his work; 2) The alienation of the worker from the product of his work; 3) The alienation of the worker from his fellow man; 4) The alienation of the worker from his species being. A detailed examination of these four categories would take us outside the scope of this paper. The subject has been well researched elsewhere and we will simply summarize the main thrust of the argument as it applies to class exploitation.⁹¹

The argument Marx makes is both economic and philosophical, based on both the analysis of capitalist society and on the conception of man that Marx had developed. According to Marx, the alienation of

1847 (see Mandel, Op.Cit., p.54). The best passages on the absolute impoverishment thesis can be found in the following locations: K.Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy, Op.Cit., pp.62-63, and in the same text: K.Marx, "On the Question of Free Trade", p.221. For passages illustrating the relative impoverishment thesis, see K.Marx, Wage Labour and Capital, Op.Cit., pp.33,39.

An argument can be made that Marx's conception of alienation is related to his theory of exploitation, that is to say that the latter is the condition for the former's existence. From this perspective the concepts alienation and exploitation although related should be viewed as analytically distinct.

⁹¹ For a complete and detailed explanation of Marx's theory of alienation see I. Meszaros, Marx's Theory of Alienation, (London: Merlin Press, 1970); B. Ollman, Alienation: Marx's Conception of Man in Capitalist Society, Op.Cit., For a critique of Marx's theory see M. Dillas, "On Alienation", Encounter, (Vol.36, #5, May 1971). For an analysis of how

the worker from the product of his work arises historically and is understandable in terms of the transition from feudalism to capitalism, where the capitalist class, by virtue of being owners of the means of production, are both owners and controllers of the product that emerges from the production process. This constitutes the alienation or separation of the worker from the product of his labour and establishes a series of relations both within and between classes.

The alienation of the worker from his species being, while involving a philosophical conception of alienation, also involves a historical process that is intimately related in capitalist society to the technical division of labour and the introduction of machinery. In the section dealing with Marx's conception of man, a distinction was drawn between man and animals in terms of their respective species activities. For Marx, species activity, i.e., productive activity or labour, involves for man not only the performance or execution of the labour function, but also the conception or conscious performance of the labour function (planning, thinking, forming a perception of the object to be produced, producing aesthetically, etc.). It is thus far more than instinctual activity and has at the same time a specific social form. However, these two functions of labour can be separated or alienated as Harry Braverman has pointed out in another context:

"Thus in humans, as distinguished from animals, the unity between the motive force of labour and the labour itself is not inviolable. The unity of conception and execution may be dissolved. The conception must still precede and govern execution, but the idea as conceived by one may be executed by another. The driving force of human labour remains consciousness, but the unity between the two may be broken in the individual and reasserted in the group, the workshop, the community, the society as a whole."⁹²

This point relates to the earlier proposition that "full determinate owning" is "control over other people's labour". For Marx, as has already been shown, it implies control over labour to set the

the theory differs in Marx and Hegel see chapter four of Jean Hyppolite, Studies on Marx and Hegel, (New York:Harper and Row, 1969), pp.70-93.

⁹² Harry Braverman, Op.Cit., p.50.

production process in motion and control over the reproduction of labour so that the production process can continue to be set in motion over time. However, the separation of conception and execution adds two further specifications to this control over labour: 1) control over labour in terms of channeling and limiting the amount and the form that conscious activity plays in performing in the production process and in consciously structuring and altering the way in which the production process will be set in motion and according to what ends. 2) control over the reproduction of the phenomenon described above in terms of some individuals or classes being excluded from the possibility of acquiring and utilizing the necessary capabilities required to perform this function.

It is precisely these four forms of control over other people's labour and the consequences derived therefrom that constituted for Marx the exploitation of labour by capital, which in turn comprises an important aspect of the alienation of the worker from his work, the product of his work, his fellow men and his species being.⁹³

⁹³ An important qualification must be placed on this interpretation lest we be accused of reading into Marx's work more meaning than actually exists there. To begin with, many of the works of the 1844-52 period were written as polemics or for the purposes of propaganda and thus the theoretical implications often times have to be abstracted and presented in a more coherent and structured form. If the interpretation of theory is seen as a process of synthesis designed to elaborate the probable meaning or meanings associated with a particular writer's work, rather than an investigation to find the one correct interpretation, then this process is justified. However, detailed textual analysis is required in order to do this. In the case of our argument concerning the four forms of control over labour associated with ownership that Marx developed, the first two at the level of execution have already been well documented. The control over conception and its separation from execution are derived from Marx's conception of what constitutes species activity and how the division of labour within the factory as it appears in the C.M.P. negates and separates the two functions of execution and conception. There are a number of quotes from the following texts that could be used to demonstrate that this is precisely what Marx was suggesting: K.Marx, the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts in H.Martel & H.Selsam, Op. Cit., pp.296-303; K.Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy, Op.Cit., pp.127-147. In the same way, the famous passage dealing with the abolition of the division of labour under communism where men can fish in the morning, hunt in the afternoon, etc. seems to represent symbolically the transcendence of the limitations of both the technical and social division of labour so that conception and execution can to an extent be reintegrated in the individual so his

However, a complete understanding of these relationships that Marx developed between economy and class, and especially how private property is translated into control over other people's labour, can only be grasped by analyzing how the political and the ideological enter into this process. It is to these factors that we now turn our attention.

Politics and Class

In dealing with the relations between economy and class, it was suggested that for Marx classes must be viewed initially in terms of the specific nature and relations that pertain to a historically evolved mode of production. In the C.M.P., founded on a competitive market system, wealth is primarily generated by wage-labour and accordingly the essential relationship that enjoins capital and wage labour is the former's control over the latter's labour (power). The property relationship thus initially appears in Marx's work to be the necessary relationship permitting the capitalist class to maintain control over labour and to appropriate the products produced by the working class.

Although the relationships of property are a necessary condition for the control over labour and its products, they are not a sufficient condition. It is precisely for this reason that the analysis of

potential for development is enhanced. See K.Marx & F.Engels, The German Ideology, Op.Cit., p.45.

This line of argument that we have suggested Marx adhered to involves at the same time recognizing a number of assumptions that Marx made. The most important of these is the assumption of an inherent creative capacity existing in man and being posited as one of the essential needs man must satisfy. This involves at the same time an examination of the alienation experienced by the capitalist, something that we have not dealt with. However, in the final analysis, one could suggest that control over other people's labour (power) is still the main factor of class exploitation for Marx. The form that this control takes is thus an important aspect of the analysis of social classes. As Marx suggested, it is a control that imposes itself as a social power that has been monopolized, and for this reason transcendence means breaking that control and the very system that engenders it, a process that for Marx lies at the very heart of the class struggle.

politics and class forms an important and at the same time necessary (given the dialectical conception of totality) part in Marx's analysis. For Marx, the subsumption of individuals under definite classes and the production and reproduction of class relationships cannot be understood without a careful analysis of the relations that obtain between the state and civil society, between class power and state power.

The relationships that Marx discussed concerning economy and class were treated in the last section primarily at the highest level of abstraction in terms of the properties associated with the C.M.P.. In dealing with politics and class the relationships also involve analysis of specific social formations as well as particular concrete conjunctures of relations. In each case the level of analysis must and will be specified in order to clarify the nature of the theoretical propositions put forward by Marx in terms of the relationships involving the translation of class power into state power.

As Ralph Miliband has pointed out,

"The starting point of the Marxist theory of politics and the state is its categorical rejection of [the] view of the state as the trustee, instrument or agent of 'society as a whole'. This rejection necessarily follows from the Marxist conception of society as a class society ... the state is an essential means of class domination. It is not a neutral referee arbitrating between competing interests: it is inevitably a deeply engaged partisan. It is not above class struggles but right in them. Its intervention in the affairs of society is crucial, constant and pervasive; and the intervention is closely conditioned by the most fundamental of the state's characteristics, namely that it is a means of class domination..."⁹⁴

Marx did not arrive at such a position by analysing the various forms of the state and civil society separately. He analysed them historically as a unity and in doing so hypothesized a relation of correspondence between political structure or forms of state and the

⁹⁴R. Miliband, Marxism and Politics, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp.66-67.

level or degree of class formation. For Marx, such an analysis must focus on the emergence of a class whose dominance is associated with a specific mode of production. In the case of the C.M.P. the correspondence between forms of state and class formation is arrived at by analyzing the two phases that characterized the class formation of the bourgeoisie. "In the bourgeoisie we have two phases to distinguish: that in which it constituted itself as a class under the regime of feudalism and absolute monarchy, and that in which, already constituted as a class, it overthrew feudalism and monarchy to make society a bourgeois society."⁹⁵

However, in the second phase of class formation, the bourgeoisie, already constituted as a class, must overcome or adopt to specific structural constraints that pertain to its existence as the dominant class. Marx elaborates on this point emphasizing the relations that pertain to phases of class formation and forms of state or political structure:

"By the mere fact that it is a class and no longer an estate, the bourgeoisie is forced to organize itself no longer locally but nationally, and to give a general form to its mean average interest. Through the emancipation of private property from the community the state has become a separate entity based beside and outside civil society; but it is nothing more than the form of organization which the bourgeoisie necessarily adopt both for internal and external purposes, for the mutual guarantee of their property and interests. The independence of the state is only found nowadays in those countries where the estates have not yet completely developed into classes, where the estates, done away with in more advanced countries, still have a part to play and where there exists a mixture."⁹⁶

Marx links the relationship between different phases of class formation and the political structure of the state to specific

⁹⁵ K.Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy, Op.Cit., p.173.

⁹⁶ K.Marx & F.Engels, The German Ideology, Op.Cit., p.79.

structural constraints. And the nature of these structural constraints can only be understood through an analysis of specific social formations. Thus, in describing the process of bourgeois class formation in Germany from the Reformation to the nineteenth century, Marx points to the underdevelopment of the German burghers and the localised dominance of the "imperial petty princes" and backwoods junkers.

Germany's trade was dominated by the Dutch bourgeoisie. Its industrial infrastructure was far behind that of Britain, its commercialization of agriculture had hardly begun due to the "preservation of feudal dependence and corvées". Thus, the political organization reflected the economic situation and took the form of "small principalities" and "free imperial cities". Owing to the undeveloped stage of bourgeois class formation and the many divisions associated with the landed proprietors, the state assumed or acquired "abnormal independence" which resulted in a high degree of relative autonomy being invested in the bureaucracy itself.⁹⁷

Thus, at one level of analysis, there is in Marx's work an interesting but largely undeveloped theory pertaining to the structural constraints associated with various phases of class formation and the corresponding forms of state or political structure. However, Marx's analysis of politics and class is largely concerned with what he considered the "modern state" and its immediate relationship to the class relations and antagonisms generated in civil society. In this respect our analysis must come to grips with three of his famous formulations, namely that "... political power is precisely the official expression of antagonism in civil society",⁹⁸ that political

⁹⁷ K. Marx & F. Engels, The German Ideology, Op.Cit., pp.210-212. For a good analysis of this point and Marx's early writings on the state, see A.F. McGovern, "The Young Marx on the State", Science and Society, (Vol.34, 1970).

⁹⁸ K. Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy, Op.Cit., p.174.

power is "merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another",⁹⁹ and finally that "the executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie."¹⁰⁰

In order to accomplish this we must begin at the highest level of abstraction to discover what functions Marx attributed to the "bourgeois state" on the basis of its functioning according to the nature of the C.M.P. itself. We may then proceed to the level of specific social formations in order to view the three ways in which Marx conceived these functions to be operationalized. This involves an analysis of the three ways that Marx perceived class power translated into state power and the emergence of his conception of the state as an "instrument" of the ruling class. Such an analysis will also introduce the distinction Marx made between the economic definition of classes at the level of the economic base and the political-ideological definition of classes at the level of the superstructure.

For Marx, as has already been suggested, the nature of civil society is an expression of the mode of production upon which it is founded. Because Marx also maintained that the specific character of the state is dependent upon the relations that pertain to civil society, and because these relations are for the most part defined as class relations, the general functions of the state are thereby imbued with a class character as well.

The most important function that Marx identified with the modern state was the economic function. The primacy of this function arises because, as Marx pointed out, "... in modern bourgeois society, all relations are subordinated in practice to the one abstract monetary-commercial relation."¹⁰¹ This economic function has a dual character in that the expansion of the world market necessitated the development

⁹⁹ K. Marx & F. Engels, The Communist Manifesto, Selected Works, (Moscow, 1959), p. 51, in S. Aveneri, Marx's Socialism, (New York: Lieber-Atherton, 1973), p. 163.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 163 (p. 39 in Selected Works)

¹⁰¹ K. Marx & F. Engels, The German Ideology, Op. Cit. p. 460.

of international modes of intercourse so that, in relation to the economic, the state has both domestic and international responsibilities and obligations. This economic function under which Marx included such activities as the enactment of protective tariffs, the levying of taxes and internal infrastructural development (railways, canals, roads, etc.) is conditioned by the necessity of the state to protect and ensure the advantageous functioning of bourgeois property relations and the corresponding class interests bound up with them.

This dual necessity of both protecting and promoting bourgeois property relations leads to the second function that Marx discussed and may be referred to as the repressive or coercive function of the state. Because Marx maintained that bourgeois society is an association founded on competition, this repressive or coercive function must subordinate itself to this condition. For this reason Marx maintained that the bourgeois state "cannot permit any struggle among the citizens except the struggle of competition".¹⁰² Once individual or class relations exceed or go beyond the realm of competitive intercourse, then the state via its coercive apparatus (military, police, etc.) is the agency that intercedes.

There is also a third function of the state that can be derived from Marx's work during the 1844-52 period which may be termed the ideology or legitimation function. Although this particular function will be discussed in the next section, it is mentioned here because so many of Marx's critics have disavowed its existence in his work, or have tended to disassociate it with his theory of state. For example, Robert Tucker has suggested:

"Political theorists have addressed themselves to the basic question: What requirements must the sovereign state meet in order to be adjudged a good state.... In these terms Marx both

¹⁰² Ibid., p.403.

was and was not a political philosopher. On the one hand, he never addressed himself to the problem of legitimizing state power. But on the other hand, he did have a definite position with regard to this problem. He had a normative as well as descriptive theory of the state. Very simply and briefly, it stated that there are no conditions under which the state can be adjudged a good state."¹⁰³

Technically, Tucker's position is correct in that even the form of state associated with the "dictatorship of the proletariat" was conceived as a "necessity" and not as being good as an end in itself. In this respect Marx denies that the state can objectively speaking be perceived as legitimate. However, what Tucker and many other theorists have ignored is Marx's insistence that the state must appear as legitimate, and that accordingly his analysis of legitimacy is guided by an entirely different set of criteria from those associated with the traditional theories of legitimacy. It begins from the fundamental premise that,

"For each new class which puts itself in the place of one ruling before it, is compelled merely in order to carry through its aim, to represent its interest as the common interest of all the members of society... it has to give its ideas the form of universality and represent them as the only rational, universally valid ones ... every new class therefore achieves its hegemony only on a broader basis than that of the class ruling previously... it is ... necessary to represent a particular interest as general, or the "general interest" as ruling."¹⁰⁴

Thus, for Marx the state by virtue of the fact that it is imbued with a class basis, must perform an ideological or legitimization function to mask its class character and make the interests of the dominant class the basis of the general or national interest. It performs this function in a number of ways that can only be ascertained by the analysis of specific social formations and conjunctures of

¹⁰³R. Tucker, "Marx as a Political Theorist" in S. Aveneri, Marx's Socialism, Op.Cit., p.149.

¹⁰⁴K. Marx & F. Engels, The German Ideology, Op.Cit., pp.62-63.

relations. These may include the charismatic nature of the executive (Louis Bonaparte), the use of elections, the granting of concessions to non-ruling classes, etc.¹⁰⁵ It can be carried out through specific state institutions or through the ideologists attached to the ruling class, a group that Gramsci was later to call "managers of legitimation".

The existence of the three functions of the modern state; the economic, the repressive and the ideological-legitimation, can be theoretically articulated at the highest level of abstraction, i.e., the level involving the conditions pertaining to the C.M.P. itself. However, this can only be done in the most general terms. The actual manner in which they are carried out can only be derived from an analysis of specific social formations and conjunctures of relations. Marx attempted such an analysis in his studies of France involving the period 1830-1852. In doing so, he discussed three ways in which class power became translated into state power. These three forms, for the purposes of classification, may be termed: 1) Theory of state personnel. 2) Theory of economic domination. 3) Theory of structural determination or structural constraint.¹⁰⁶

In discussing the role that state personnel play in the translation of class power into political power, Marx was careful to distinguish between the manner in which this translation pertained to the state's legislative body or "national assembly" and the other bodies that constituted the state apparatus. In discussing the former in relation to the petty bourgeoisie, Marx pointed out,

¹⁰⁵ For references to Marx's use of legitimation in connection with elections and concessions to non-ruling classes, see: K.Marx, The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, Op.Cit., p.45 and K.Marx, Class Struggle in France, Op.Cit., 212, 219. A complete examination of Marx's concept of legitimation would involve analyzing its utilization in terms of the balance of class forces, and the various phases of the class struggle.

¹⁰⁶ I have borrowed these terms from R.Miliband, Marxism and Politics, (Oxford:Oxford University Press, 1977), pp.68-74. Professor Miliband has not analyzed these three modes of explanation in terms of Marx's own work, but has presented an interesting and useful assessment of their utilization within the Marxian tradition.

"One must not form the narrow-minded notion that the petty bourgeoisie, on principle, wishes to enforce an egoist class interest. Rather, it believes that the special conditions of its emancipation are the general conditions within the frame of which alone modern society can be saved and the class struggle avoided. Just as little must one imagine that the democratic representatives are indeed all shopkeepers or enthusiastic champions of shopkeepers. According to their education and their individual position they may be as far apart as heaven from earth. What makes them representatives of the petty bourgeoisie is the fact that in their minds they do not get beyond the limits which the latter do not get beyond in life, that they are constantly driven theoretically to the same problems and solutions to which material interest and social position drive the latter practically. This is in general the relationship between the political and literary representative of a class and the class they represent."¹⁰⁷

The last portion of this passage has two important implications, only one of which will concern us here. The implications deal with both the narrowly defined issue of class interests and parliamentary representation as well as the more general relationship involving the influence exercised by a class over groups of individuals associated with this class.¹⁰⁸ What this second, more general, relationship suggests is a conception of class identification. Marx appears to be suggesting a form of ideological affinity that exists between the classes of civil society defined in the first instance at the economic level, and the groups of individuals occupying either social or state institutions.

In The German Ideology he divided what he called the ruling class into two parts where the second faction, the "conceptive ideologists", are assigned their class position not in terms of their position in the material relations of production, but in terms of their position

¹⁰⁷ K.Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, Op.Cit., pp.50-51.

¹⁰⁸ Marx addresses himself to the issue of state personnel and classes in civil society in his 1855 article, "The Crisis in England and the British Constitution", K.Marx & F.Engels, Marx and Engels on Britain, (Moscow:Foreign Language Publishing House, 1962), pp.423-427.

in mental production "as thinkers, as producers of ideas [who] regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age."¹⁰⁹ What this suggests in terms of the translation of class power into state power is that it becomes very important for the dominant class to expand and consolidate the membership of the ruling class. It becomes important to staff the institutions of the state apparatus with those individuals who can represent, initiate and enforce the material and ideological interests of the dominant class. This can be accomplished by the dominant class ensuring favourable appointments to the various institutions of the state, by having its own hand-picked representatives elected to office, or by institutionalized pressure being brought to bear on non-conformists.

It is precisely this domination of state personnel and personnel connected with social institutions associated with the state that led Marx to formulate the relation of class power and state power in France in the following terms.

"But it is precisely with the maintenance of the extensive state machine in its numerous ramifications, that the material interests of the French bourgeoisie are interwoven in the closest fashion. Here it finds posts for its surplus population and makes up in the form of state salaries for what it cannot pocket in the form of profit, interest, rents and honorariums. Its political interests compelled it to increase daily the repressive measures and therefore the resources and the personnel of the state power, while at the same time it had to wage an uninterrupted war against public opinion and mistrustfully mutilate and cripple the independent organs of the social movement, where it did not succeed in amputating them entirely."¹¹⁰

In the same context, in his discussion of the election of 1849 in France, Marx demonstrated how the utilization of state and other personnel enabled the party of order, representing the three large factions of the French bourgeoisie, to dominate the election:

¹⁰⁹ K. Marx & F. Engels, The German Ideology, Op.Cit., p.61.

¹¹⁰ K. Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, Op.Cit.,

The party of order had enormous financial resources at its disposal; it had organized branches throughout France; it had all the ideologists of the old society in its pay; it had the influence of the existing government power at its disposal; it possessed an army of unpaid vassals in the mass of the petty bourgeoisie and peasants who, still separated from the revolutionary movement, found in the high dignitaries of property, the natural representatives of their petty property and their petty prejudices. Represented throughout the country by innumerable petty monarchs, the party of the order could punish the rejection of its candidates as insurrection, and could dismiss rebellious workers, recalcitrant farm labourers, servants, clerks, railway officials, registrars and all the functionaries who are its social subordinates."¹¹¹

There are many examples of Marx utilizing the theme of state personnel to demonstrate how the capitalist class dominates the state to consolidate its rule. His analysis of France during the 1848-52 period constantly focuses on the efforts of the executive and legislative bodies and the different fractions of the capitalist class, attempting to capture the key institutions of the state apparatus by staffing these institutions with their supporters and representatives. As Engels would later point out, "...it is in the state institutions where the rule of the bourgeoisie is organized."¹¹²

However, the organization of the bourgeoisie within the state apparatus can occur in different ways depending on the relations within and between classes as they manifest themselves in civil society itself. It is for this reason that Marx at times also utilizes a conception of economic domination and structural constraint to illustrate the translation of class power into state power.

The themes of economic domination and structural constraint much like the conception of state personnel was mainly used in a descriptive fashion by Marx, and although important theoretical implications

¹¹¹ K. Marx, The Class Struggle in France, quoted in R. Miliband, Marxism and Politics, Op.Cit., pp.55-56.

¹¹² F. Engels, in introduction to K. Marx, The Class Struggles in France, Op.Cit., p.196.

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arise from his analysis, he did not in great detail deal with these implications at the theoretical level. Therefore, in abstracting the theoretical implications that arise from Marx's work, this must always be kept in mind, and consequently the interpretation of these theoretical implications is always open for discussion and criticism. Thus, on dealing with Marx's conception of economic domination and structural constraint as it pertains to the relationship between class and state power, a brief textual analysis is required to bring out the theoretical implications that are involved. These theoretical implications must then be subjected to interpretation at two separate levels, that of a specific social formation and that pertaining to concrete immediate conjunctures of relations. The relations that pertain to both levels, their interrelatedness, may then be specified.

In discussing the period of the July monarchy under Louis Phillipe (1830-1848), Marx suggested that,

"It was not the French bourgeoisie that ruled under Louis Phillipe but one faction of it: bankers, stockexchange kings, railway kings, owners of coal and iron mines and forest, a part of the landed aristocracy. It sat on the throne, it dictated laws in the chambers, it distributed public offices, from cabinet portfolios to tobacco bureau posts."¹¹³

This 'finance aristocracy' as Marx called it, which in part included "the Rothschild Dynasty", "made the laws, was at the head of the administration of the state, had command of all the organized public authorities, dominated public opinion through the actual state of affairs and through the press."¹¹⁴

The finance aristocracy by virtue of its domination was able to control the manner in which state expenditures and state loans were utilized and in fact by facilitating their utilization for public

¹¹³ K.Marx, The Class Struggles in France, Op.Cit., p.206.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p.208

work projects and infrastructural developments such as railways on a large scale perpetuated the indebtedness of the state. Thus the finance aristocracy, as Marx pointed out, "had a direct interest in the indebtedness of the state" in terms of increasing the volume of the funds loaned by them to the state, and therefore in terms of increased gain from interest rates, etc."¹¹⁵

This hegemonic domination by one fraction of the capitalist class was achieved at the expense not only of other social classes, but also at the expense of other fractions of the capitalist class, in particular the industrial bourgeoisie whose interests were concentrated in trade, industry, agriculture and shipping. These manufacturers and industrialists whom Marx referred to as the non-ruling fraction of the French bourgeoisie saw their economic interests being compromised by this arrangement. "Their interest is undoubtedly reduction of the costs of production, and hence reduction of the taxes, which enter into production and hence reduction of the state debts, the interest on which enters into the taxes, hence the overthrow of the finance aristocracy."¹¹⁶

The conflict between these fractions of the capitalist class increased, following the potato blight and crop failures of 1845-46. This in turn was supplemented by a general commercial and industrial crisis in England in 1847 which forced French industrialists and manufacturers to exploit their own domestic markets, thus bringing them into conflict with the petty bourgeoisie. These events precipitated the February revolution of 1848 in which the balance of class forces was constituted by a loose alliance of petty bourgeoisie, workers, peasantry, manufacturers and industrialists against the finance aristocracy. The result was the overthrow of the July monarchy, the emergence of a republican form of state under a provisional

¹¹⁵ Ibid... pp. 206 207.

¹¹⁶ Ibid... p. 271.

government which was "a compromise between the different classes which together had overturned the July throne, but whose interests were mutually exclusive."¹¹⁷

Up until this point, Marx's analysis has mainly focused on how the economic domination of the finance aristocracy allowed it to utilize state power. However, this theme of economic domination gives way to the conception of structural constraint or structural determinism with the arrival of the revolution of 1848. It is at this point that Marx suggests: "The first thing that the February republic had to do was rather to complete the rule of the bourgeoisie by allowing beside the finance aristocracy, all the propertied classes to enter into the orbit of political power."¹¹⁸ This necessity to extend the boundaries of the ruling class arose not only because of the relations and the conflicts within the capitalist class itself, but also because of the relations that had developed between it and the other classes. The industrial bourgeoisie in order to challenge the hegemonic dominance of the finance aristocracy had forged loose alliances with sections of the other social classes. These social classes in turn attempted to consolidate greater power for themselves, and the attempted proletarian revolution in June indicated the necessity for the capitalist class to consolidate itself by extending and making more comprehensive the boundaries of the ruling class so as to include the whole bourgeoisie.

This involved compromises within the capitalist class and concessions to the other social classes, the most important of these concessions being the further extension and implementation of universal (male) suffrage, Marx described the implications of the constitutional enactment of universal suffrage in the following terms:

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p.210.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p.212.

"The comprehensive contradiction of this constitution, however, consists of the following: the classes whose social slavery the constitution is to perpetuate, proletariat, peasantry, petty bourgeoisie, it puts in[potential] possession of political power through universal suffrage. And, from the class whose old social power it sanctions, the bourgeoisie, it withdraws the political guarantees of this power. It forces the political rule of the bourgeoisie into democratic conditions which at every moment help the hostile classes to victory and jeopardizes the very foundations of bourgeois society."¹¹⁹

It is at this point that the conception of structural determination or structural constraint may be seen to enter into Marx's analysis of how class power is translated into state power. He suggested that the very maintenance of the rule of capitalist relations of production was dependent on both compromises between contending classes and consolidation within classes. The extension of the boundaries of the ruling class was necessitated by two factors. The victory of the industrial bourgeoisie over the financial aristocracy in 1848 and the necessity of the whole capitalist class to consolidate against the threat of universal suffrage and proletarian insurrection.

He suggested that "the parliamentary republic was the sole possible form for the rule of the bourgeoisie as a whole".¹²⁰ "It was the unavoidable condition of their common rule, the sole form of state in which their general class interest subjected to itself at the same time both the claims of the particular factions and all the remaining classes of society."¹²¹ As he summarized the results of these developments elsewhere, "the newly formed class relationships had established themselves and the contending factions of the ruling class had recourse to a compromise which allowed them to continue the struggle among themselves and at the same time to keep the exhausted masses of the people out of it."¹²²

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p.235

¹²⁰ K.Marx, The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, Op.Cit. p.90.

¹²¹ Ibid., p.96.

¹²² K.Marx, The Class Struggles in France, Op.Cit., p.239.

Thus, just as was shown earlier, where structural constraint mediated the process of class formation, and the emergence of the corresponding forms of state or political structure, here again structural constraint becomes for Marx a means of conceptualizing the translation of class power into state power. When he suggests that a parliamentary republic was the only form in which the bourgeoisie as a whole could rule, he was not thereby implying that this was a historic necessity that had to occur! Perhaps the June insurrection of the proletariat could have been successful and altered this course of events, perhaps Louis Bonaparte's coup d'état could have occurred sooner. A whole host of possibilities could have altered this historic development. What Marx seems to be suggesting is that the continuing dominance of the capitalist class was dependent on their being able to consolidate their rule by extending the boundaries of the ruling class so that the full force of the capitalist class as a whole could be utilized, so as to maintain those conditions necessary for the rule of capital.*

Thus, specific structural constraints limit the possibilities of the means by which class power can continue to be maintained and continuously translated into state power. These constraints are built into the very functioning of the capitalist mode of production itself and are manifested in different ways depending on the nature of the social formation involved as well as the form that specific conjunctures of relations present themselves in. Marx discusses such structural constraints as the level of the development of the productive forces, the position of the French economy in relation to the world economy and the forms of class struggle being waged. In short, he presents a whole host of factors whose totality constitutes

* For an interesting discussion of Marx's writings on France in connection with structural constraint and economic domination, see: Nicos Poulantzas, Political Power and Social Classes, (London: New Left Books, 1976, 3rd impression), pp.229-252.

a restrictive barrier which both conditions and limits the possible ways in which class power can be translated into state power in such a way as to maintain the dominance of capitalist relations of production and thus the capitalist class itself.

The further development of Marx's theory of politics and class would require a far more detailed analysis of all the events and factors Marx described in relation to the development of social classes in France during the 1830-1852 period. However, the general outline that has been developed will suffice and allow us to briefly re examine the theoretical implications that are involved here. This requires keeping in mind, as mentioned earlier, that Marx never attempted to utilize these theoretical implications to develop a systematic theory of the state.

To begin with, Marx's contention that the state is a committee for handling the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie is obviously a far more complex and sophisticated formulation than it may at first appear to be. As has been shown, it presupposes an analysis of such factors as the form of the ruling class, the various phases of the class struggle and the relations of the various fractions of classes to one another. But all these factors in turn include concepts that must be specified. The first one to be dealt with is the concept 'ruling class'.

Marx's utilization of the concept ruling class, though far from being unproblematic, is not nearly as important as it was often made out to be. The concept appears to have been first used by Marx and Engels in The German Ideology where, in a discussion of the feudal epoch, they suggested "the organization of the ruling class, the nobility, had, therefore everywhere a monarch at its head."¹²³ Its utilization next appears in a chapter of The German Ideology entitled "Ruling

¹²³ K. Marx & F. Engels, The German Ideology, Op.Cit., p.44.

Class and Ruling Ideas". It is in this section that Marx and Engels conceived the ruling class to be composed of two parts, one defined functionally in terms of the mental production and distribution of ideologies and the other defined in terms of its being the "ruling material force of society", "the class which has the means of material production at its disposal". It is the "dominant material relationships ... which make the one class the ruling one".¹²⁴ The former are the "conceptive ideologists" of this class, the latter its "active members".¹²⁵

Marx introduced the concept within a very general context. Although first mentioned in relation to the feudal epoch, it is only introduced in passing in the above quote and not mentioned again for another twenty pages or so. It is only in the section on "Ruling Class and Ruling Ideas" that the concept is dissected at all. Thus, its development as a concept does not begin in relation to a specific mode of production but rather it is treated generally in terms of what Marx called "a conception of history".

At this very general level, the concept seems to imply economic, political and ideological criteria. The ruling class can only be that class which controls the dominant material relationships, and at this general level Marx maintains that this must lead to control of the political and ideological as well. But does this not confuse the relationships between the economic, the political and the ideological? Does this not imply a form of superdeterminism where the economic controls all other levels? To answer these questions we are only concerned here with the relations pertaining to the political and the economic. It is in relation to these two factors that the concept must first be specified.

What must be kept in mind when viewing Marx's concept of ruling

¹²⁴ Ibid., p.123

¹²⁵ Ibid., p.124.

class in relation to the political and the economic is that it is a concept that summarizes the translation of class power into state power. It cannot therefore be used to describe how this translation takes place, but only in terms of summarizing the effects of this translation. Thus, when Marx uses the concept outside of its normal usage occurring within a general "conception of history" it still retains the status of a derivative concept, that is one whose heuristic value lies in its ability to summarize a multiplicity of relations already defined and explained in terms of other concepts. This can be seen for example in Marx's writings on France where he mentions such terms as ruling class, ruling fraction, nonruling fraction, ruling system and nonruling classes. The fact that the finance aristocracy was the "ruling faction of the bourgeoisie" during the 1830-1848 period is dependent on the three possible ways in which its class power was translated into political power (involving theories of state personnel, economic domination and structural constraint). It is also dependent on how this translation took place in terms of the class struggle that was being waged at the time.

When seen in this light, the term ruling class is mainly utilized in a descriptive fashion by Marx and, although the ruling class is composed of definite individuals, it is not a concept that immediately explains who these individuals are or why they are members of the ruling class. Marx seems to imply that some individuals perform the function of the ruling class, such as ideologists. However, given the general nature of the concept, it would have to be treated in a much more theoretical manner if it is to contain analytic properties or qualities that would allow for such a partitioning of individuals.

Thus in examining the relations between the industrial bourgeoisie and the finance aristocracy in two periods, 1830-1848 and 1848-1852, the concept ruling class can only summarize the relations between

these two fractions of the bourgeoisie; it cannot determine the specificity of these relations. For example, Marx points out:

"In England, industry predominates; in France, agriculture. In England industry requires free trade in France, protective tariffs, national monopoly alongside of the other monopolies. French industry does not dominate French production, the French industrialists therefore do not dominate the French bourgeoisie. In order to secure the advancement of their interests as against the remaining faction of the bourgeoisie, they cannot, like the English, take the lead of the movement and simultaneously push their class interests to the fore: they must fall in the train of the revolution and serve interests which are opposed to the collective interests of their class. In February, they had misunderstood this position: February sharpened their wits. And who is more directly threatened by the workers than the employer, the industrialist capitalist? The manufacturer, therefore of necessity became in France the most fanatical member of the Party of Order. The reduction of his profit by finance, what is that compared with the abolition of profit by the proletariat?"¹²⁶

Thus the finance aristocracy remains the dominant faction of the French bourgeoisie even in the 1848-52 period. Marx of course specifies that the other propertied classes had to be brought into the "orbit of political power" in order to consolidate the whole capitalist class against the other social classes and in particular against the insurrectionary proletariat of Paris and Lyons. It is in this sense that one can suggest the extension of the boundaries of the ruling class. However, this is merely a descriptive summation of the relations involving all the fractions of the capitalist class and in no way accounts for the dominance of one fraction vis-à-vis another fraction. One could perhaps suggest a hierarchy of relations within the ruling class itself but this would again require further theoretical development of the concept itself. Thus in the final analysis the concept ruling class only summarizes the relations involving the translation of class power into political power. This

¹²⁶K.Marx, The Class Struggles in France, Op.Cit., p.271.

translation involving economic domination, structural constraint and state personnel is utilized by Marx to show both relations between and within classes. Thus it is how the translation takes place within specific social formations during definite conjunctures of relations that Marx concentrates his attention in developing his theory of social classes. Therefore, the concept ruling class, although potentially important, only derives its importance in Marx's work at the highest level of abstraction, in relation to a "conception of history" where there have always been rulers and ruled, oppressors and oppressed. When seen in this light, the concept ruling class, although potentially important, is only of minimal or secondary importance in terms of the development of Marx's theory of social classes. Marx's theory can stand without the concept, but could be vastly improved by a more detailed theoretical approach to its utilization.

If it is accepted that the concept ruling class has no explanatory powers of its own, then the problem of the relative autonomy of the state can be more productively pursued. As Ralph Miliband has pointed out,

"The relative autonomy of the state was mainly acknowledged by Marx and Engels in connection with forms of state where the executive power dominated all other elements of the state system - for instance, the absolutist state, or the Bonapartist or Bismarckian one. Where Marx and Engels do acknowledge the relative autonomy of the state, they tend to do so in terms which sometimes exaggerate the extent of that autonomy."¹²⁷

What is meant by relative autonomy of the state has been defined by Miliband in the following terms: "It simply consists in the degree of freedom which the state (normally meaning in this context the executive power) has in determining how best to serve what those who hold power conceive to be the "national" interest and which in

¹²⁷ R. Miliband, Marxism and Politics, Op.Cit., p.83.

fact involves the service of the interests of the ruling class."¹²⁸ However, for our purposes, the last part of this definition must be changed. Because the concept ruling class has no explanatory capacity of its own in Marx's work, the interests which the state serves are those of the dominant class or the dominant fraction of that class. Therefore relative autonomy exists to the extent that the activities and the programmes of the state may be exercised or employed independently of the interests of the dominant class or its dominant fraction.

With this conception of relative autonomy in mind, it would appear that for Marx the conception of relative autonomy is derived from the extent to which class power is translated into state power. This translation, as has been shown, was utilized in three different ways (state personnel, economic domination and structural constraint). This does not imply that because there are three forms of this translation to be found in Marx's work that there are therefore three conceptions of relative autonomy. All three forms of this translation have in common the same mediating factor, and it is therefore this mediating factor which can account for the nature or degree of relative autonomy. This agency of mediation is the class struggle itself.

In order to demonstrate this point we must now turn our attention to ideology and class, not only because the ideological is an important dimension of Marx's theory of social classes, but also because the class struggle involves the economic, the ideological and the political simultaneously. Thus, it is the conception of the class struggle which unites these three factors and in doing so renders complete our contention that for Marx an understanding of social classes involves an analysis of historical relationships conceptualized in terms of social relational categories that are endowed with the capacity to explain the making and remaking of social structure rather than its completion.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 83.

Ideology and Class

Part of the difficulty associated with interpreting Marx's theory of social classes concerns the interrelatedness of the various components that comprise it. What Marx said of the concept property is equally valid for his concept of social class: "To try and give a definition of property as an independent relation, a category apart, an abstract and eternal idea, can be nothing but an illusion of metaphysics or jurisprudence."¹²⁹

Thus, while treating the various relations of social classes separately may satisfy certain basic methodological requirements, the dialectical conception of totality that Marx adhered to suggests that the interpreter of Marx must at some point attempt to integrate the various parts and present them within the context of a totality that embraces the interrelatedness of the economic, political, and ideological elements. Therefore, in this section, rather than dealing with Marx's conception of ideology separately, we will attempt to focus on one dimension of this conception and through it synthesize the various elements that constitute the basis for Marx's theory of social classes. This one dimension which will serve as the medium for synthesis is constituted by two of Marx's most important conceptions: class struggle and class consciousness. However, before initiating an analysis of these two important conceptions, a brief specification of the Marxian conception of totality must be given.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ K. Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy, Op.Cit., p.154.

¹³⁰ The nature of Marx's conception of totality is a highly contentious issue from the point of view of both Marxist and non-Marxist schools of thought. For a discussion of Marx's conception of totality in relation to the philosophical notion of an 'epistemological break' between the 'young' and the 'mature' Marx, see L. Althusser, For Marx, (New York: Vintage Books, 1970). For a general discussion of the implications of this Marxian conception see N. Poulantzas, Political Power and Social Classes, Op.Cit., pp.195-224. For a discussion of the conception of totality from a sociological perspective, see A. Swingewood, Marx and Modern Social Theory, (London: Macmillan Press, 1975), pp.33-58.

Louis Althusser has suggested that in The German Ideology one can locate an important "epistemological break" in Marx's work, which enabled Marx to remove himself from the idealist influences of both Hegel and Feuerbach and assisted Marx in founding a new 'problematic' based on "two distinct theoretical disciplines": a theory of history (historical materialism) and a theory of philosophy (dialectical materialism).¹³¹ By initiating this break, Althusser has suggested that Marx not only dissociated himself from the Hegelian conception of an 'expressive totality' but also initiated a new theory of totality based upon the two important conceptions of contradiction and overdeterminism.¹³²

Although it is important in terms of periodisation to specify when and where this break took place (and whether it occurred in the manner suggested by Althusser) we shall ignore these questions and instead focus upon Marx's critique of Proudhon in the Poverty of Philosophy (1847) to briefly illustrate the nature of Marx's conception of totality which in general characterizes his work during the 1844-52 period.¹³³

In criticizing what he considered to be Proudhon's metaphysical approach to the study of political economy, Marx suggested,

"The production relations of every society form a whole. M. Proudhon considers economic relations as so many social phases engendering one another, resulting one from the other like antithesis from the thesis, and realizing in their logical sequence the impersonal reason of humanity. The only drawback to this method is that when he comes to examine a single one of these phases, M. Proudhon cannot explain it without having recourse to all the other relations of society; which relations, however, he has not yet made his dialectical movement engender. When after that M. Proudhon, by means of pure reason, proceeds to give birth to these other phases, he treats them as if they were new born babes. He forgets that they are the same age as the first In constructing the edifice of an ideological system by means of the categories of political economy, the limbs of the social system are dislocated. The different limbs of society are converted into so many separate societies, following one upon the other. How indeed could

¹³¹ Louis Althusser, Op.Cit., pp.32-34.

¹³² Ibid., pp.87-129.

¹³³ This is done so as to remain consistent with our primary objective in this chapter which is to present a thematic, not developmental,

the single logical formula of movement, of sequence, of time, explain the structure of society in which all relations co-exist simultaneously and support one another!"¹³⁴

In this passage Marx is emphasizing the necessity of treating society and social structure as a whole, as a totality. However, this totality must not be conceived in terms of a vertical spatial metaphor where the different parts or levels of the totality appear randomly stacked one upon the other, nor can it be conceived in terms of a horizontal sequential metaphor where the parts or levels follow one after the other. To understand and conceptualize the nature of the totality is for Marx to understand its complex contradictory character in a dialectical manner:

"For Proudhon," wrote Marx, "every economic category has two sides - one good, the other bad". He looks upon these categories as the petty bourgeoisie looks upon the great men of history: Napoleon was a great man; he did a lot of good; he also did a lot of harm The problem to be solved: to keep the good side while eliminating the bad! Dialectical thought rejects these false antitheses and grasps "...the coexistence of two contradictory sides, their conflict and their fusion into a new category. The very setting of the problem of eliminating the bad side cuts short the dialectical movement. It is not the category which is posed and opposed to itself, but its contradictory nature..."¹³⁵

From this perspective Marx maintained that by specifying the nature of the contradictions within the totality one could therefore situate and analyze the dynamic of the various stages of historical development and the process of transition of one stage to another. In the 1844-52 period we find various attempts by Marx to develop categories that would enable him to develop a conception of a contradictory, complex totality. And at the same time these efforts also represent attempts to theoretically develop the nature of the

perspective of Marx's work.

¹³⁴ K. Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy, Op.Cit., p.110.

¹³⁵ Ibid., pp.111-113, quoted in A. Swingewood, Marx and Modern Social Theory, Op.Cit., p.22.

relations of reciprocal determination between the various components, levels or structures that Marx used to conceptualize this totality. Thus in The Holy Family we find Marx relying heavily on the relations between the state and civil society to conceptualize this totality. In The German Ideology we find Marx introducing the relations between base and superstructure to account for the interrelatedness of the economic, political and ideological levels or moments. Each of these conceptions represents two things. As Hobsbawm has pointed out: "First, it insists on a hierarchy of social phenomena ... and second on the existence within any society of internal tensions (contradictions) which counteract the tendency of the system to maintain itself as a going concern."¹³⁶

In the 1844-52 period Marx's analysis of the hierarchy of social phenomena led to his suggestion of the primacy of the economic vis a vis the political and the ideological. This primacy is not simply to be conceived in terms of cause and effect, nor in a more complex fashion can it be regarded as a form of structural determination with the economy viewed as determinant in the last instance. To suggest the former is to ignore Marx's conception of 'mediation', and to adopt the latter is to either reread certain aspects of Marx's later work back into this earlier period, or similarly to project certain aspects of contemporary theoretical development back into Marx's own work.¹³⁷

In order to come to grips with Marx's conception of the primacy of the economic vis a vis its position within the totality, it is necessary to briefly focus on what might be termed his two fundamental conceptions of contradiction. Having done this, we can then proceed

¹³⁶ E.J. Hobsbawm, "Karl Marx's Contribution to Historiography" in R. Blackburn, editor, Ideology in Social Science, (Glasgow: Fontana-Collins, 3rd impression, 1975), p.274.

¹³⁷ This is not to deny that Marx had some notion of structural determination as we have already attempted to show in the section on politics and class. It is simply to suggest that neither a "symptomatic reading" or careful textual analysis can adequately demonstrate the centrality of this conception in Marx's work during this period.

to further specify the nature of this totality, or complex structural whole, as it relates to Marx's theory of social classes through an analysis of class struggle and class consciousness. In discussing the method for studying different modes of production Marx pointed out in relation to feudalism that:

"Thus feudal production, to be judged properly, must be considered as a mode of production founded on antagonism. It must be shown how wealth was produced within this antagonism, how the productive forces were developed at the same time as class antagonisms, how one of the classes ... went on growing until the material conditions for its emancipation had attained full maturity. Is not this saying that the mode of production, the relations in which productive forces are developed, are anything but eternal laws, but that they correspond to a definite development of men and of their productive forces, and that a change in men's productive forces necessarily brings about a change in their relations of production?"¹³⁸

What this passage seems to suggest is that Marx perceived the necessity of both distinguishing and relating two conceptions of contradiction, one which relates to the contradiction between social classes and one which relates to the contradiction between the forces and relations of production. These two conceptions of contradiction appear constantly throughout the 1844-52 period, sometimes explicitly, sometimes implicitly. For example, in The German Ideology (1845) Marx notes the existence of contradictions between classes: "Thus society has hitherto always developed within the framework of a contradiction - in antiquity the contradiction between free men and slaves, in the middle ages that between nobility and serfs, in modern times that between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat."¹³⁹

In the same fashion, the Communist Manifesto contains many

¹³⁸ K. Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy, Op.Cit., p.122.

¹³⁹ K. Marx & F. Engels, The German Ideology, Moscow edition, 1964, pp.474-475, quoted in K. Marx, Economy, Class and Social Revolution, Z.A. Jordan, editor, (London: Michael Joseph Ltd., 1971).

references to the contradiction between the forces of production and the relations of production as they manifested their form in both the feudal and capitalist modes of production.¹⁴⁰

The nature of these two types of contradiction was not conceived by Marx in terms of a series of mystifying deductions. They were formulated from the concrete studies he undertook concerning specific modes of production, and the corresponding social formations and historically conditioned conjunctures of relations. The contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production is for Marx what one might call a systematic contradiction. It relates to the developmental tendencies of a specific mode of production by imposing limits or barriers on the system's ability to reproduce those conditions necessary for its maintenance. The contradiction between social classes is of a fundamentally different nature in that rather than representing a systematic contradiction, it represents a contradiction between social groupings whose conditions of existence and essential interests are mutually exclusive and yet are at the same time inherently bound up with each other in relations of domination and subordination. It is this second contradiction between social classes which imposes limits or barriers upon one class's ability to reproduce those conditions necessary for the maintenance of relations of domination and subordination.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ See in particular K. Marx & F. Engels, The Communist Manifesto, Op.Cit., pp.113-114.

¹⁴¹ The thesis concerning the existence of two conceptions of contradiction in Marx's work was formulated by Maurice Godelier in his article "Structure and Contradiction in Capital", in R. Blackburn, editor, Ideology in Social Science, Op.Cit., pp.334-369. Godelier argues that the contradiction between the forces and relations of production is a contradiction between two structures while the contradiction between classes is an internal contradiction within the relations of production. We have not adopted Godelier's conception of contradiction between and within structures because in the 1844-52 period there is not enough evidence to support the argument that Marx had an adequate conception of either structure or function. This only came about as a result of his detailed analysis of the C.M.P. in the 1850's and 1860's and with the writing of Capital.

It was through historical analysis and the theoretical development of the nature of these contradictions that Marx attempted to assert the primacy of the economic in relation to the other elements constituting the totality. However, this analysis was plagued by a constant tension between a historicist and a materialist conception of development. The former tendency, largely a result of Marx's conception of the proletariat as a universal class, conceived these contradictions as inherently revolutionary leading necessarily to the inevitable breakdown or destruction of the C.M.P.. The latter tendency, rather than viewing these contradictions as inherently explosive, tended to conceive them in terms of their potentially revolutionary nature depending on how they were generated historically and handled concretely in the course of class struggle which depended to a large extent on the development of the class consciousness of the proletariat. In order to further specify the nature of the dynamic of the Marxian totality and to elucidate the nature of both the historicist and materialist conceptions of development as they pertain to Marx's theory of social classes, we must focus our attention on his conception of class struggle and class consciousness during the 1844-52 period.*

It was in The Communist Manifesto that Marx and Engels presented their most commonly noted conception of the class struggle:

* This tension between a historicist and a materialist conception of historical development in Marx's work cannot be regarded as simply the result of internal theoretical developments. Also it must be linked with the impact of the revolutionary conjuncture of 1848 on Marx's work, as well as his personal involvement with the working classes of France, Germany, Britain and Belgium. To assert anything less is to ignore the importance of the unity of theory and practice in Marx's work. For such an analysis that focuses upon these factors and their relation to Marx's theoretical development, see David Fernbach's introductory essay to Karl Marx, The Revolutions of 1848: Political Writings, Vol.1, (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1973).

"The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebian, lord and serf, guildmaster and journeyman; in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterupted, now hidden, now open, fight, a fight that each time ended either in a revolutionary re-constitution of society at large or in the common ruin of the contending classes."¹⁴²

However, after presenting this general historical conception of the class struggle, they specify that in modern bourgeois society there are to be found "new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones."¹⁴³ What this signifies in relation to the development of Marx's theory in the 1844-52 period is the presence of a theory of class struggle as it relates specifically to capitalism. Thus, unlike the concept ruling class which remained theoretically articulated at a very general level involving a materialist conception of history, the concept of class struggle was rearticulated in terms of its role and nature as it pertained to the development of the C.M.P. itself and its corresponding social formations and conjunctures of relations.

In the section dealing with economy and class it was suggested that in studying specific social formations, Marx was faced with the difficulty of developing his theory of class in relation to social formations that were characterized by the overlapping of several modes of production (ie., the feudal and C.M.P. in France). In the same fashion his conception of class struggle had to be adopted to this overlapping which made it all the more difficult to develop.¹⁴⁴ In attempting to resolve the theoretical implications that were involved in this problem, Marx in effect developed two conceptions of the class struggle; one where he focused primarily upon the conflict

¹⁴² K. Marx & F. Engels, The Communist Manifesto, Op.Cit., p.108.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p.109.

¹⁴⁴ In The Communist Manifesto Marx, in a somewhat different context, referred to this phenomenon as "the conservation of the old modes of production": K. Marx & F. Engels, The Communist Manifesto, Op.Cit., p.111.

engendered between capital and wage labour (notably in The Poverty of Philosophy and The Communist Manifesto), the other where he concentrated on situating the capital-wage labour confrontation in the general field of class struggle involving the relations between and within all the social classes that made up the specific social formations under investigation (notably in The Class Struggles in France and the Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte). In discussing the first of these two conceptions involving wage-labour and capital, Marx describes the evolution of the class struggle in terms of the various stages or phases that it passes through depending upon the level of development of the relations and forces of production, and the corresponding degree to which class formation had progressed.¹⁴⁵

"The proletariat goes through various stages of development. With its birth begins its struggle with the bourgeoisie. At first the contest is carried on by individual labourers, then by the work people of a factory, then by the operatives of one trade, in one locality against the individual bourgeois who directly exploits them. They direct their attacks ... against the instruments of production themselves; they destroy imported wares that compete with their labour, they smash to pieces machinery, they set factories ablaze, they seek to restore by force the vanished status of the workman of the Middle Ages."¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ In this respect one can see certain parallels between Marx's discussion of the process of class formation and class struggle involving on the one hand the bourgeoisie and on the other the working class. While there is some merit to be given to the thesis that the parallels affirm a historic conception in Marx in so far as the analysis focuses on how a dominant class emerges and asserts itself (the bourgeoisie out of feudalism, the working class out of capitalism), a careful textual analysis reveals substantial differences in the two processes. For purposes of comparison between the process of class formation through class struggle involving the bourgeoisie and proletariat see: K.Marx & F.Engels, The German Ideology in E.J. Hobsbawm, Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations, Op. Cit., pp.127-139; and K.Marx & F.Engels, The Communist Manifesto, Op.Cit., pp.115-119.

¹⁴⁶ K.Marx & F.Engels, The Communist Manifesto, Op.Cit., p.115.

This phase of the struggle of the proletariat, usually associated with the Luddite movement, occurred at different times and in different forms depending on when and how the factory system was introduced in different European countries. The workers involved, mainly skilled tradesmen and guild members, threatened by the competitive impact of modern industry which eventually destroyed most of their traditional way of life were, according to Marx, gradually but violently subsumed under definite class relations which no longer corresponded to the personal, patriarchal relations of the past. Yet, because of the impact of competition, these workers resembled more "an incoherent mass scattered over the whole country", and thus the class struggle remained very much in its infancy.

However, in the second phase of the class struggle, Marx notes that the results of the developmental tendencies of the C.M.P., while responsible for destroying one form of existence of the labouring classes, at the same time creates the conditions which "give rise to a new form of struggle: "Large scale industry concentrates in one place a crowd of people unknown to one another. Competition divides their interests. But the maintenance of wages, this common interest which they have against their boss, unites them in a common thought of resistance - combination."¹⁴⁷

According to Marx, this development of trade unions and co-operative societies has a dual purpose; that of stopping competition among the workers and that of maintaining wages. It is this process of forming working class associations that Marx characterized as the formation or organization of the proletarians into a class. And as this process of class formation develops, "the collisions between workmen and individual bourgeoisie takes more and more the character of collisions between two classes."¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ K.Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy, Op.Cit., p.172. A general summary of Marx and Engels' theory of trade unionism can be found in Richard Hyman, Marxism and the Sociology of Trade Unionism, (London: Pluto Press Ltd., 1971), pp.4-11.

¹⁴⁸ K.Marx & F.Engels, The Communist Manifesto, Op.Cit., p.116.

The third phase of the class struggle that Marx discusses begins after the working class has constituted itself as a class against capital and culminates in the period of social revolution with "the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie which lays the foundation for the sway of the proletariat".¹⁴⁹ In this third phase, Marx discusses how the workers' associations expand and develop into national organizations, a development which both signifies and adds to the political character of the class struggle. Such a development which centralizes the "numerous local struggles" into "one national struggle" between classes is promoted in part by "the improved means of communication that are created by modern industry that place the workers of different localities in contact with one another".¹⁵⁰ At the same time Marx points out that the development of capitalism ruins numerous sections of the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie so that the ranks of the proletariat continue to swell. Thus, class antagonisms become more simplified and more expressive of the fundamental conflict between bourgeoisie and proletarian. As Marx summarizes this historical movement,

"The development of modern industry, therefore, cuts from under its feet the very foundation on which the bourgeoisie produces and appropriates products. What the bourgeoisie therefore produces above all is its own grave-diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable."¹⁵¹

However, Marx's conception of class struggle is far more complex than this relatively simple three stage depiction suggests. The class struggle as Marx understood it has economic, political and ideological dimensions which inevitably have a bearing on local, national and international relations which must be specified in the process of analysis. As he and Engels pointed out in The

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p.119.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p.119.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p.119.

Communist Manifesto, their approach depicted only "the most general phases of the development of the proletariat" and thus only represented an approximation of the complexities associated with each stage of the class struggle. Yet, despite the general nature of the analysis, it was important for the development of Marx's theory of social classes in that by linking the developmental tendencies of the C.M.P. to the development of proletarian class struggle Marx was able to articulate an important synthesis between theory and practice. The conclusions that he and Engels drew from this synthesis in the Manifesto are summarized by David Fernbach in the following terms:

"The fetters that capitalist relations of production impose on the productive forces render inevitable the replacement of capitalism by communism; capitalist relations can only be abolished by the class struggles that they themselves engender; the proletariat can only transform capitalist into communist society by organizing itself as the ruling class and using its state power to expropriate the owners of capital; and the abolition of classes consequent on the instauration of communism will lead to the withering away of the state itself."¹⁵²

The second conception of class struggle that Marx developed concerned itself with situating the wage labour - capital confrontation within a larger context involving the relations within and between all the classes making up a specific social formation. The nature and importance of the theoretical implications that Marx derived from this conception of the class struggle can be understood from an analysis of the following lengthy passage taken from The Class Struggles in France (1850).

"The development of the industrial proletariat is in general conditioned by the industrial bourgeoisie. Only under its rule does the proletariat gain that extensive material existence which can raise its revolution to a national one, and does itself create the modern means of production which become just

¹⁵² K. Marx, The Revolutions of 1848, David Fernbach, editor; Op.Cit., p.33.

so many means of its revolutionary emancipation. Only its rule tears up the material roots of feudal society and levels the ground on which alone a proletarian revolution is possible... The industrial bourgeoisie can rule only where modern industry shapes all property relations to suit itself, and industry can win this power only where it has conquered the world market, for natural bounds are inadequate for its development. But French industry to a great extent maintains its command even of the national market only through a more or less modified system of prohibitive duties. While, therefore, the French proletariat at the moment of a revolution possesses in Paris actual power and influence which spur it on to a drive beyond its means, in the rest of France it is crowded into separate scattered industrial centres, being almost lost in the superior numbers of peasants and petty bourgeoisie. The struggle against capital in its developed modern form, in its decisive aspect, the struggle of the industrial wage worker against the industrial bourgeoisie, is in France a partial phenomenon which after the February days so much the less could supply the national content of the revolution since the struggle against capital's secondary modes of exploitation, that of the peasant against usury and mortgages, or of the petty bourgeoisie against wholesale dealer, bankers and manufacturer, in a word against bankruptcy, was still hidden in the general uprisings against the finance aristocracy. Nothing is more understandable than that the Paris proletariat sought to secure the advancement of its own interests side by side with those of the bourgeoisie instead of enforcing them as the revolutionary interests of society itself.... The French workers could not take a step forward, could not touch the hair of the bourgeoisie order, until the course of the revolution had aroused the mass of the nation, peasants and petty bourgeoisie standing between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, against this order, against the rule of capital, and had forced it to attach itself to the proletarians as their protagonists."¹⁵³

The essential point that Marx is emphasizing in this passage is the important role that the balance of class forces plays in the course of class struggle.¹⁵⁴ He maintained that in order to understand

¹⁵³ K.Marx, The Class Struggles in France, Op.Cit., pp.213-214.

¹⁵⁴ Marx uses a number of terms interchangeably to express this conception of balance of class forces. It is perhaps best expressed in what he called the "different class alignments of society". See K.Marx, A review of Guizot's book, Why has the English Revolution Been Successful? in Marx and Engels on Britain, Op.Cit., pp.344-350. For a useful discussion of these different usages see N.Poulantzas, Political Power and Social Classes, Op.Cit., pp.234-252.

this conception one must begin by recognizing that historically conditioned social formations are characterized by different levels or degrees of development depending on the manner in which endogenous and exogenous factors effect the specific combination of ideological, political and economic relations that make up the structure of a social formation. Although Marx had not as yet theoretically articulated an adequate conception of either structure or function which would have enabled him to further the development of this point, he did manage to address himself to the important questions involved through his understanding of what he had called the effect of "the conservation of old modes of production".

Thus in the case of France he recognized the significance of the overlapping of feudal (F.M.P.) and capitalist modes of production within specific social formations so that economic, political and ideological relations exhibited a complex contradictory character. On the one hand, there existed the class relations between bourgeoisie and proletariat, characteristic of the C.M.P., and on the other hand, there existed a complex of relations involving landlord, peasant, bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie which Marx lumped together under what he called "capital's secondary modes of exploitation", referring to their mixed feudal/capitalist character.*

This overlap of the F.M.P. and the C.M.P. produced a mixture of feudal and capitalist class relations and institutional structures. While Marx was constantly occupied with describing the evolution of these relations and structures, he also recognized the necessity of depicting the manner in which they combined, and how this combination conditioned and in turn was conditioned by the class struggle.

Although he was as yet unable to theoretically develop the nature of this combination which would have given his conception

* By "mixed feudal/capitalist character" is meant the impact of the capitalist credit market upon pre-capitalist class formation.

of totality a more concrete meaning, Marx was able to observe the effects of this combination in terms of his conception of the balance of class forces and its relation to the manner in which contradictions are handled during the course of class struggle.

This can be seen in terms of the passage quoted from The Class Struggles in France. In this passage Marx points out that the struggle between wage-labour and capital was only a "partial phenomena" due to the relatively underdeveloped nature of the C.M.P. in France. This underdevelopment, largely a result of Britain's domination of the export market and the Napoleonic land settlement which retarded the growth of the French domestic market by inhibiting the transfer of resources from the land to industry, resulted in a complex of class relations and institutional structures which outside of Paris were still imbued with a feudal character. The isolation of the Paris proletariat from the other sections of the French working class and the numerical dominance of the peasantry and petty bourgeoisie resulted in a series of alliances and compromises between the various social classes which had important implications for the manner in which the class struggle developed. Thus, in the February revolution of 1848, peasantry, petty bourgeoisie, proletariat and industrial bourgeoisie forged a loose alliance against the finance aristocracy. In the June uprisings this alliance collapsed as all the social classes turned against the workers of Paris and Lyons.

These various 'class alignments' represent how the balance of class forces changed from one conjuncture of relations to another. As the section on politics and class demonstrated, this conception of balance of class forces also includes the various alignments between different fractions of classes, where one

particular fraction may exercise a form of hegemony within the various alliances and coalitions.

For Marx the balance of class forces is dependent upon the institutional structure of a social formation and how the specific combination of economic, political and ideological relations shape the class practices of the various social classes during a specific historically conditioned conjuncture. Thus, Marx's analysis of France attempts to delineate these specific factors. He begins by locating the central importance of the commercial crisis in England in 1847 and discusses its impact upon the world market and in particular its effect upon the development of the relations and forces of production in France. He then focuses upon the specific class relations in France noting not only their fundamental characteristics but the nature and direction of their movement or development. By focusing upon both the evolution of institutional structures and class relations as well as attempting to focus upon the specific manner in which these elements coalesced, Marx was able to note both the objective conditions that accounted for the failure of the working class to seize power in the revolutions of 1848, and also to point out why this failure could be altered according to the manner in which class relations were developing.

Thus Marx concluded that for the working class in France to challenge the rule of capital it would require the support of the petty bourgeoisie and the French peasantry. Such an alliance would require a certain reciprocity of class interests which according to Marx would depend upon the manner in which capital's "secondary modes of exploitation" were developing. Marx's conclusions

suggested that the political and economic class relations under which peasantry, petty bourgeoisie and proletariat were subsumed were tending towards being supportive of the convergence of their respective objective class interests in terms of being polarized against the class interests of the various fractions of the dominant class.¹⁵⁵ However, to have a significant impact upon the reproduction of class relations these political and economic developments must be accompanied by the corresponding development of the class consciousness of the subordinate classes. This in turn implies the existence of a challenge to the dominant ideology. It is to these factors and their position within Marx's theory that we now turn our attention.

The subsumption of individuals under definite class relations has been discussed to this point mainly in political and economic terms. However, Marx emphasized that this subsumption process, characterized by relations of domination and subordination, was also the product of ideological class relations, and this ideological dimension of class constituted an important component of his conception of totality and a decisive element in his various studies on the role and nature of class struggle.

A careful examination of Marx's conception of ideology reveals that there is more than one meaning that can be associated with his usage of the term. However, as was emphasized in the beginning of this section, our analysis is concerned with only one dimension of these various meaning which pertains directly to his theory of social classes and also serves to illuminate the relation of this theory to his conception of totality. In this respect our

¹⁵⁵ For a synthesis of Marx's analysis of the changing class relations of the French peasantry from 1800-1852, see K. Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, Op.Cit., pp.128-133.

analysis is concerned with the role and nature of class consciousness.¹⁵⁶

For Marx class consciousness has both a pervasive and somewhat loosely defined meaning, as well as a somewhat narrower, more analytic specification. The former is perhaps best understood in terms of a definition given by E.P. Thompson who in his own work on the history of the English working class suggested,

"The class experience is largely determined by the productive relations into which men are born - or enter involuntarily. Class consciousness is the way in which these experiences are handled in cultural terms; embodied in traditions, value systems, ideas and institutional forms. If the class experience appears as determined, class consciousness does not."¹⁵⁷

It is in reference to this meaning of class consciousness that Marx discusses how "a certain mode of production or industrial stage is always combined with a particular mode of co-operation or social stage".¹⁵⁸ This social stage or mode of co-operation stands for and includes Marx's notion of praxis, the unity of perception and activity, that involves the learning process of individuals. It is through human praxis that the members of a social class share "a definite form of expressing their life, a definite mode of life on their part".¹⁵⁹ It is also through human praxis that they inherit and uncritically absorb the results of previous class experiences.

When observed from this perspective it must always be remembered that class consciousness arises and exists within different social classes because of the presence of a multiplicity of social relations that obtain between social classes. As Thompson has put it so well,

¹⁵⁶ For an informative study of the various meanings associated with Marx's concept of ideology, see D. MacGregor, "The Concept of Ideology," M.A. Thesis, Carleton University, 1974.

¹⁵⁷ E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class, (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1968)

¹⁵⁸ K. Marx & F. Engels, The German Ideology, Op.Cit., p.32.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p.39.

"We cannot have two distinct classes each with an independent being, and then bring them into relationship with each other. We cannot have love without lovers nor deference without squires and labourers".¹⁶⁰ It is in this respect that Marx at times made the existence of class consciousness (as the expression of antagonism between social classes) the fundamental or primary factor in his conception of class: "In so far as millions of families live under economic conditions of existence that separate their mode of life, their interests and their culture from those of other classes, and put them in hostile opposition to the latter, they form a class."¹⁶¹

The somewhat narrower and more analytic meaning that Marx associated with class consciousness must be distinguished not only from the former cultural conception, but also from what might be termed his notion of class psychology. The following passage in which Marx describes the conflict between Legitimists and Orleanists, the two royalist factions who formed the Party of Order in France, is representative of this notion of class psychology.

"What kept the two factions apart, therefore, was not any so called principles, it was their material conditions of existence, two different kinds of property, it was the old contrast between capital and landed property. That at the same time old memories; personal enmities, fears and hopes, prejudices and illusions, sympathies and antipathies, convictions, articles of faith and principles bound them to one or the other royal house. Who is there that denies this? Upon the different forms of property, upon the social conditions of existence, rises an entire superstructure of distinct and peculiarly formed sentiments, illusions, modes of thought and views of life. The entire class creates and forms them out of its material foundations and out of the corresponding social relations. The single individual who derives them through tradition and upbringing may imagine that they form the real motives and the starting point of activity."¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class, Op.Cit., p.9.

¹⁶¹ K.Marx, The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, Op.Cit., p.126.

¹⁶² K.Marx, The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, Selected Works, Vol.1, pp.247-48; quoted in Z.A. Jordan, Op.Cit., p.149.

What distinguishes this second conception of class consciousness from this notion of class psychology is that the former represents a systematic expression of the interests of a social class, and displays a certain logical coherence in terms of rendering these ~~interests~~ operational; that is to say, the class interests are formulated and articulated in opposition to those of other social classes, and this includes an understanding of what is required to achieve these interests as well as a desire to undertake what is necessary in order to achieve them.

This does not imply that class consciousness is an all or nothing proposition. Marx maintained that the members of different social classes exhibited different degrees of class consciousness depending on the nature of the specific socio-historical situation. However, he did maintain that during certain revolutionary periods one could see in the consciousness of a rising class the highest possible degree of comprehension of its socio-historical situation.

"As soon as it has risen up, a class in which the revolutionary interests of society are concentrated finds the content and the material for its revolutionary activity directly in its own situation: foes to be laid low, measures dictated by the needs of the struggle to be taken; the consequences of its own deeds drive it on. It makes no theoretical inquiries into its own task."¹⁶³

Marx maintained that in order for such a form of class consciousness to emerge, there must be in existence a class that is making a revolution in such a way that it appears as the representative of the whole society. This is possible because its interests are not confined to narrow particularistic class based interests. To begin with, they are broader and more general and thus can attract the support of other non-ruling classes.¹⁶⁴

In advancing this proposition Marx adds an important and at the

¹⁶³ K. Marx, The Class Struggles in France, Op.Cit., p.213.

¹⁶⁴ K. Marx & F. Engels, The German Ideology, Op.Cit., pp.62-63.

same time controversial dimension to his conception of class consciousness. For want of a better term, it may be referred to as the "generalizability of class interests".

The implicit meaning that Marx applied to this conception can perhaps be demonstrated best by way of an example. In speaking of the class interests of the petty bourgeoisie, Marx pointed out:

"Capital hounds it chiefly as its creditor so it demands credit institutions; capital crushes it by competition so it demands associations supported by the state; capital overwhelms it by concentration so it demands progressive taxes, limitations on inheritance, taking over of large works by the state, and other measures that forcibly stem from the growth of science."¹⁶⁵

These particular demands may or may not be incorporated in the class consciousness of the petty bourgeoisie. The degree to which they are can only be judged by an analysis of various historical conjunctures of relations. The question that arises however concerns how generalizable these demands are in relation to the conflicting interests of other social classes. The importance of this question can be derived from the following passage where Marx discusses the character of the "Montagne", a coalition grouping formed by the working class and petty bourgeoisie in France during the 1848-49 period.

"The peculiar character of the social-democracy is epitomized by the fact that democratic-republican institutions are demanded as a means, not of doing away with two extremes, wage labour and capital, but of weakening their antagonism and transforming it into harmony. However different the means proposed for the attainment of this end may be, however much it may be trimmed with more or less revolutionary notions, the content remains the same. This content is the transformation of society in a democratic way, but a transformation within the bounds of the petty bourgeoisie. Only one must not form the narrow-minded notion that the petty bourgeoisie on principle wishes to enforce an egoistic class interest. Rather, it believes that

¹⁶⁵ K.Marx & F.Engels, Selected Works, Vol.1, p.281, quoted in D.MacGregor, Op.Cit., p.281.

the special conditions of its emancipation are the general conditions within the frame of which alone modern society can be saved and the class struggle avoided."¹⁶⁶

In the first passage Marx provided an example of the demands the petty bourgeoisie adopted in response to the developmental tendencies of capital. These responses represent and include the short term immediate interests of the petty bourgeoisie and are consciously articulated by them in terms of their own class position and their own class experience. In the second passage Marx is looking at these class interests from a broader perspective in terms of their applicability to society as a whole. He does not dispute that the petty bourgeoisie consciously believes these interests to be both the condition for its own emancipation as well as that of society as a whole. Nor does he dispute that the petty bourgeoisie believes that class struggle can be eliminated or neutralised by the implementation of a programme formulated on the basis of these interests. What Marx does suggest is that while these notions have a validity in relation to the class position and conscious class experience of the petty bourgeoisie, they represent a form of false consciousness in terms of maintaining that the contradiction between capital and wage labour can be resolved in this manner.

Marx did not conceive this to be an arbitrary, ethical, or ideological claim on his part. He claimed that the validity of specific class interests can be ascertained in an objective manner by relating them to the socio-historical situation of various social classes, and the changing nature of their class situation as a result of the developmental tendencies associated with a particular mode of production. It is in this sense that Marx claimed that one could objectively specify what the "real

¹⁶⁶ K.Marx, Selected Works, Vol.1, in Z.A. Jordan, Op.Cit., p.158.

interests" of a social class are, and how generalizable these interests are in relation to other social classes and society as a whole. It was from this perspective that he attempted to go beyond his previous ideological notion of the proletariat being the universal class by attempting to demonstrate objectively why the "real" class interests of the working class were universally generalizable and thus applicable to society as a whole given the developmental tendencies of the C.M.P..¹⁶⁷

Marx's concern for "unmasking" "real" or "objective" class interests reflected his understanding of the impact of a competitive market society and its corresponding dominant ideology on the development of class consciousness. For Marx, the dominant ideology (and the

¹⁶⁷ It is in this respect that one can locate within Marx's work the Lukacsian conception of "ascribed class consciousness". Lukacs defined this notion as consisting of "the ideas, sentiments, etc. which men in a given situation of life would have if they were able to grasp in its entirety this situation and the interests derived from it both as regards immediate action and as regards the structure of society which would correspond to those interests." (G.Lukacs, History and Class Consciousness, quoted in I.Meszaros, Aspects of History and Class Consciousness, (London: Merlin Press, 1974), p.9.)

One must be extremely cautious in specifying exactly what Marx meant by the "real" or "objective" interests of a class. A distortion of his view all too easily leads to such false dichotomies as that which counterposes "true proletarian science" to "false bourgeois ideology". On the other hand, as Miliband has pointed out, "One possible consequence of this is to turn class consciousness into a catechismal orthodoxy, departure and dissent from which become grave and punishable offences. Another consequence is to enhance tremendously the role of the keepers of the orthodoxy, namely the party leaders and their appointees. If revolutionary consciousness i.e., the conscious perception of the real objective interests of the working class can be so precisely defined, there must be an authority to define it, and to decide when and in what ways it must be modified." (R.Miliband, Marxism and Politics, Op.Cit., p.35.)

manner in which it is structurally incorporated into the dominant institutions of a society) plays an important integrative role in shaping the consciousness of the various social classes. It accordingly influences the different forms that the class conflict assumes.

It was from this perspective that Marx and Engels developed their conception of the relation between the ruling class and the ruling ideas. The ruling ideas of various historical epochs represented "nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships."¹⁶⁸ Their production and distribution by the "conceptive ideologists" of the dominant classes served "partly as an embellishment or realization of dominance and partly as a moral means for this domination."¹⁶⁹ Thus law and morality, philosophy and religion reflected the conditions of existence of the dominant class and assisted in the regulation of class relations through their emphasis on order and consensus.¹⁷⁰

In their analysis of the ruling ideas associated with capitalism, Marx and Engels provided examples showing how these ideas tended to mask the real interests of the subordinate classes (and of the bourgeoisie), often times setting members of the same class in opposition to one another thus undermining the internal stability and cohesion of the class and its different associations.

However, in articulating how the dominant ideology entered into the class consciousness of the subordinate classes, Marx's theory remained somewhat sketchy. Certainly one can locate certain similarities between Marx's conception of the dominant ideology

¹⁶⁸ K. Marx & F. Engels, The German Ideology, Op.Cit., p.61.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p.472.

¹⁷⁰ For Marx's analysis of the development of bourgeois ideology from Locke and Hobbes through to Bentham and Mill, see Ibid., pp. 460-464.

and Gramsci's notion of hegemony. But if there are these implicit notions in his work, they are only presented theoretically within the general theory of ideology and not explicitly in relation to his two conceptions of class consciousness.¹⁷¹

This is not to deny that Marx took account of a number of important factors that inhibited the development of class consciousness in the working class. The development and dissemination of a bourgeois ideology expressive of a philosophy of possessive individualism; the free competitive market society, where the labourer becomes a commodity and "competes against himself as a member of the working class"; the separation of execution from conception in the labour process and the corresponding material and spiritual impoverishment; the translation of class power into state power where the subordinate classes become subsumed under definite political class relations of domination and subordination. All these forms, whether embodied in ideas, material relationships, or institutional structures are identified by Marx as inhibiting the development of even the most elementary form of class consciousness, namely the perception by individuals of a common class identity.

Given these inhibiting factors, Marx's conception of class consciousness was developed from the standpoint of how these factors could be overcome. Thus he focused on how class consciousness developed in the working class through participation in the class struggle and through the development of working class organizations. It was from this standpoint that he emphasized the

¹⁷¹ Gramsci's conception of hegemony has been summarized in the following terms:

"By hegemony Gramsci seems to mean a socio-political situation, in his terminology a moment in which the philosophy and practice of a society fuse or are in equilibrium, an order in which a certain way of life and thought are dominant, in which one concept of reality is diffused throughout society in all its institutional and private manifestations informing all its spirit, all taste, morality, customs, religious and political principles, and all social relations, particularly in the intellectual and moral connotation." From, G. Williams, "The Concept of 'Egemonia' in the Thought of Antonio Gramsci", Journal of the History of Ideas, (Vol. 21, #4, 1960), p. 587.

importance of the working class developing a "revolutionary consciousness" that would be required for the abolition of capitalist society.

Although there are other aspects of Marx's conception of class consciousness that could be discussed, it would not be unfair to suggest that his two conceptions of class consciousness do not amount to a systematic presentation of the subject.¹⁷² As such, there are a number of theoretical considerations to which he never really addressed himself. These neglected theoretical considerations such as the impact of status affiliations and nationalism, to mention only two, can and should be utilized in developing a critique of Marx's two conceptions of class consciousness.¹⁷³ However in terms of developing an interpretation of Marx's theory of social classes the important question that must be answered is why these considerations were neglected and with what consequences for his general theory of social classes.

In answering this question attention must be drawn to the effect the development of historical materialism had on Marx's theory of classes in capitalist society. The theory of historical materialism, or as Marx called it, the materialist conception of history, concerns itself with the nature of historical development and a theoretical understanding of the process of historical

¹⁷²For a useful discussion of some of these other aspects of Marx's conception of class consciousness including a discussion of the class consciousness of the bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeoisie and the working class as well as the important part played by intellectuals in the development of class consciousness, see D. MacGregor, On the Concept of Ideology, Op.Cit., pp.33-50.

¹⁷³For a general summary and critique of Marx's position on the national question during the 1844-52 period, see K. Marx, The Revolutions of 1848, D. Feuerbach, ed., Op.Cit., pp.49-52. For an informative theoretical critique of Marx's neglect of the importance of status, see A. Giddens, The Class Structure of the Advanced Societies, (London: Hutchinson & Co. Ltd., 1973), pp.41-50.

transformation from one mode of production to another. Although each mode of production is conceived of having its own dynamic or tendential laws, historical materialism concerns itself primarily with theoretically articulating how these tendential laws can be conceived in terms of the transition from one mode of production to another. It was from this standpoint that Marx focused on the nature of systematic contradictions between forces and relations of production and on the contradiction between classes that produced the class struggle.

Because the theory of historical materialism has to approach the study of historical transformation in relation to the reciprocal effects of political, economic and ideological relations, ideas and institutional structures, it has to have a theoretical conception of totality. Thus the manner in which these various elements of the totality combine lies at the very heart of Marx's problematic. Because of this concern for theoretically articulating the nature of historical transformation and the manner in which the various elements of the totality combine, the conceptual apparatus that Marx developed was in certain respects unsuitable for developing a theory of classes in capitalist society.

The most obvious example of this phenomenon relates to the socio-cultural dimension of social class. The theory of historical materialism, because of its emphasis on historical transformation, has to theoretically develop the relationship between the transformation of social relations and ideas. Marx expressed the general principle of this relationship in the following terms.

"The same men who established their social relations in conformity with their material productivity produce also principles, ideas and categories in conformity with their social relations. Thus these ideas, these categories are as little

eternal as the relations they express. They are historical and transitory products."¹⁷⁴

In The Communist Manifesto the logical implications of this conception are expressed by Marx as follows. "Man's consciousness changes with every change in the conditions of his material existence, in his social relations and in his social life."¹⁷⁵ However, Marx understood that historical transformation was characterized by lags and uneven levels of development. Thus he articulated his notion of the conservation of old modes of production demonstrating how this effected class relations, class structure and the balance of class forces. But what about the conservation of old modes of culture? What about the conservation of the social stage that Marx described as being combined with each mode of production? The conceptual apparatus for developing historical materialism in focusing on the base-superstructure combination, was able to account for the transitory nature of ideas but not the manner in which they are conserved, and thus equipped with their own specific effectivity within the totality.

The results of this phenomenon in relation to the socio-cultural dimension of social classes can be seen in the following passage which is generally representative of Marx's work during the 1844-52 period.

"The great revolution of society brought about by competition... resolved the relations of the bourgeoisie to one another and to the proletarians into purely monetary relations ... [it] destroyed for the proletarians all naturally derived and traditional relations, eg. family and political relations, together with their entire ideological superstructure..."¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴K.Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy, Op.Cit., p.109.

¹⁷⁵K.Marx & F.Engels, The Communist Manifesto, Op.Cit., p.125.

¹⁷⁶K.Marx & F.Engels, The German Ideology, Op.Cit., p.47.

As this passage indicates, Marx tended to ignore the importance of the conservation of various traditions, value systems and ideas in the transition process from feudalism to capitalism. This preservation of certain cultural forms, the manner in which they blended with the new emerging cultural forms, the manner in which they were conserved, and the impact of the conservation process on class formation and class struggle is essential for understanding and developing a theory of class consciousness. The absence of this consideration in his theory is largely attributable to the development of a conceptual apparatus that, in Marx's own work at any rate, was unable to adequately account for the specific role and nature of the superstructure. This occurred in part because Marx's conception of the superstructure was constructed within the framework of a materialist conception of history that was largely unequipped for studying cultural continuity and discontinuity. In this respect Marx's theory of classes in capitalist society is deficient in terms of theoretically articulating the socio-cultural dimension of class.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁷ Several important qualifications must be specified in relation to this point. That Marx was not oblivious to this problem can be seen in terms of his different accounts of the impact of religion on class consciousness. Although this was never systematically developed in terms of a cultural theory, the fact that he was aware of the problem, and the fact that his theory included an attempt to grasp the importance of the "conservation of old modes of production" suggests that his conceptual apparatus was not so much flawed by contradiction as it was incomplete in terms of adequately conceptualising the base-superstructure relationship. It should also be noted that Engels' study The Conditions of the Working Class in England did to a certain extent provide a conception of cultural continuity and discontinuity in relation to class consciousness although the work itself remained largely descriptive. (For an informative account of Engels' theoretical contribution to this problem see E.J. Hobsbawm's introductory essay in F. Engels, The Conditions of the Working Class in England, (Granada Publishing, 1969), pp. 7-17.) The self-imposed limits of this study prevent a further discussion of the socio-cultural dimension of class. However, two particular studies which have emphasized the theoretical dimension of the question and its relation to the development of class consciousness should be mentioned: They are E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class, Op.Cit., Z. Bauman, Between Class & Elite, Op.Cit. For a recent study, see R. Williams, "Base & Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory", New Left Review, (#82, Nov./Dec., 1973).

Before turning our attention to Marx's work in the 1852-75 period, there is one other problem related to his theory of social classes that must be mentioned. This problem concerns the concept 'mode of production' itself. As has already been mentioned, Marx understood the concept mode of production as the combined unity of the forces and relations of production. This mode of production is combined with what Marx called a social stage or mode of co-operation which he also characterized as a productive force. Essentially (despite a certain amount of conceptual ambiguity) the mode of production represents the economic base or structure of society, while the mode of co-operation or social stage represents the ideological superstructure. The combination of these two conceptions represented Marx's theoretical articulation of the concept of totality.

It was within this conception of totality that Marx developed his theory of classes in capitalist society. As has been shown, this theory includes economic, political and ideological class relations. The specific manner in which these various relations combine or coalesce within a given social formation during a specific historical conjuncture determines the form in which the class struggle will take place. However, the class struggle as the agency of historical transformation (the organized activity of men and women) alters the specific combination of ideological, political and economic relations and thus changes the nature of the totality.

In very simplified terms this means that for Marx the contradiction that develops between the relations of production and the forces of production provides the framework within which the class struggle (the result of the contradiction between

social classes) takes place. And the balance of class forces will largely determine how and to what extent this framework is altered during the course of the class struggle.

However, as has already been pointed out, during the 1844-52 period, it was from their materialist conception of history that Marx and Engels derived their conceptual apparatus for the study of various historically evolved modes of production. Although the conceptual apparatus could be applied to the study of various historically evolved modes of production, each mode of production had its own internal properties or tendential laws that had to be specified. For only through such specification can the manner in which the elements of the totality combine be theoretically articulated, and only through such specification can the relationships between and within classes be understood. In the process of supplying his conceptual apparatus with new concepts, or providing new meaning for old concepts so as to be able to study separate modes of production and thus account for this difference, Marx occasionally uncritically borrowed certain concepts from his materialist conception of history without specifying their fundamentally different meaning when applied to a specific mode of production. Hence the concept ruling class emerged in Marx's study of the C.M.P. with an essentially unaltered character in terms of its development within his materialist conception of history. Similarly, his conception of the proletariat as a universal class (although first introduced through his critique of Hegel) was also uncritically absorbed into his theory of social classes (despite the modification already specified in relation to his conception of the generalizability of class interests) producing

a tension between a historicist and a materialist conception of development.

Although these problems are related to Marx's inability to provide an adequate conception of structure or function, to the manner in which his theory of history affected his work, and also to the particular historical conjunctures in which he was writing, there was something else that affected the development of Marx's theory of social classes; as he pointed out in the preface to his Critique of Political Economy in 1859, "Science, unlike other architects, builds not only castles in the air, but may construct separate habitable storeys of the building before laying the foundation stone."¹⁷⁸ The foundation stone that Marx had not provided in the 1844-52 period was a systematic theory of the capitalist mode of production itself. It was to this task that he devoted his studies in the 1852-1875 period and to which we are now prepared to turn our attention.

¹⁷⁸ K. Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, edited by Maurice Dobb, (New York: International Publishers, 1972), p.57.

Marx's Theory of Social Classes: 1852-1875

In a letter to Joseph Weydemeyer written in 1852, Marx summarized what he considered to be his contribution to the theory of social classes in the following terms:

"And now as to myself, no credit is due to me for discovering the existence of classes in modern society or the struggle between them. Long before me bourgeois historians had described the historical development of this class struggle, and bourgeois economists the economic anatomy of classes. What I did that was new was to prove 1) that the existence of classes is only bound up with particular historical phases in the development of production; 2) that the class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat; 3) that this dictatorship itself only constitutes the transition to the abolition of all classes and to a classless society."¹

If a literal interpretation of this letter is adopted then Marx would appear to be guilty of what Ralf Dahrendorf has called "an illegitimate fusion" of sociological and philosophical principles. The nature of this illegitimate fusion is summarized by Dahrendorf in the following terms:

"It seems to me that Marx's work falls into two separable parts. On the one hand, there are categories, hypotheses and theories which permit empirical test, ie., which either can be falsified themselves by empirical observations, or allow of derivations that can be falsified. This is true, for example, of the proposition that structural change is a result of class conflicts ... On the other hand, the work of Marx contains postulates and theories utterly removed from the possibility of empirical test. Propositions such as that of capitalist society is the last class society of history, or that communist society leads to a complete realization of human freedom, can be disputed and denied, but they cannot be refuted with the tools of science ... Marx's conception of the communist society, of its role in history, and of the time of its arrival is the pivotal point of this connection between philosophical and sociological elements of his theory of class ... Marx joins the two by a fascinating trick of definition and thereby manages to give his philosophy the

¹K.Marx & F.Engels, Selected Works, Vol.1, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969). p.528.

appearance of empirical validity and his sociology the force of indubitable truth ... For [Marx], if private property disappears (empirical hypothesis) then there are no longer classes (trick of definition)! If there are no longer any classes, there is no alienation (speculative postulate). [Thus] the realm of liberty is realized on earth (philosophical idea)."²

Marx's letter to Weydemeyer appears to support Dahrendorf's position in that one may well ask how Marx could "prove" that the class struggle in capitalist society "necessarily" leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat and hence to the first stage of the transition to a classless society. From within the framework adopted by Dahrendorf in this critique of Marx the claim of proof is of a normative status and hence invalid in that it imposes an illegitimate fusion of facts and values of the is and the ought and thus is not subject to empirical knowledge or refutation.

However, the manner in which Dahrendorf has posed the problem tends to obscure more than it reveals. His critique is dependent on the claim that the "pivotal point" of this fusion is "Marx's conception of communist society". But for Marx communism not only represents a form of society (a form that given his objection to utopian blueprints of the future, he never analyzed in detail), but also and perhaps more importantly the conception of communism is utilized to depict a process.

"Communism is for us not a state of affairs which is to be established, an ideal to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the real movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the premises now in existence."³

Dahrendorf is quite correct in suggesting that Marx's conception of communism is closely tied to his depiction of "the messianic

²R.Dahrendorf, Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1975).

³K.Marx & F.Engels, The German Ideology, quoted in K.Marx, Economy, Class and Social Revolution, edited by Z.A. Jordan, Op.Cit., p.136.

role of the proletariat". From this standpoint there is obviously an ideological thrust involved in Marx's theory of social classes. However, when communism is viewed as a process then it involves something quite different than Dahrendorf's depiction "of its role in history, of its time of arrival". It involves, as Marx pointed out, "the premises now in existence", that is to say it involves the capitalist mode of production itself.

Marx's analysis of the C.M.P. involved, as has been indicated, the locating of a dynamic, the positing of the developmental tendencies of the C.M.P. derived through his theoretical articulation of the contradictions between social classes and between forces and relations of production. However, Marx's analysis was of a dual nature. Besides seeking to develop a scientific understanding of capitalism, he also sought to utilize this analysis to present a theory for transcending capitalism, a theory which could be utilized by the working class in order to achieve their emancipation. This is why Lucio Colletti has suggested that "as well as being a science, Marxism is revolutionary ideology. It is the analysis of reality from the viewpoint of the working class."⁴

In this respect one could suggest that the second part of Marx's letter to Weydemeyer, as it relates to his theory of social classes, does not represent an illegitimate fusion of philosophical and sociological principles, but rather a legitimate fusion of theory and practice. And from this standpoint in regard to the first part of the letter to Weydemeyer one could suggest as has Ralph Miliband that "Marx himself greatly underestimated and misleadingly belittled his own contribution and that of Engels to his focusing on class antagonisms."⁵

This of course is not to deny the existence of a number of problems that arise in connection with Marx's theory of social

⁴ Lucio Colletti, "Marxism: Science or Revolution" in R. Blackburn, editor, Ideology in Social Science, Op.Cit., p.377.

⁵ R. Miliband, Marxism and Politics, Op.Cit., p.19.

classes. We have already mentioned several of these and how they are related to the conceptual apparatus that Marx developed during the 1844-52 period. By focusing on the development of this conceptual apparatus in the 1852-75 period, we will then be in a position to summarize these developments and see what problems and inconsistencies remain unresolved. In order to accomplish this the following chapter will be divided into two sections. The first section will deal with Marx's conception of the economic structure and functioning of the capitalist mode of production as it pertains to the process of class formation and class conflict. In the second section Marx's conception of the ideological/political superstructure will be dealt with from the same perspective. The paper will then conclude with a synthesis of these various elements by bringing together the three stages of the development of Marx's theory of social classes.

Social Classes and the Economic Structure and Functioning of the C.M.P.

In his analysis of the genesis of capitalist ground rent in the third volume of Capital, Marx provides his readers with a remarkable insight as to how to approach the study of class formation and class conflict in relation to specific, historically evolved modes of production.

"The specific economic form in which unpaid surplus labour is pumped out of direct producers, determines the relationship of rulers and ruled, as it grows directly out of production itself and, in turn, reacts upon it as a determining element. Upon this, however, is founded the entire formation of the economic community which grows up out of the production relations themselves, thereby simultaneously its specific political form. It is always the direct relationship of the owners of the conditions of production to the direct producers - a relation always naturally corresponding to a definite stage in the development of the methods of labour and thereby its

social productivity - which reveals the innermost secret, the hidden basis of the entire social structure, and with it the political form of the relation of sovereignty and dependence, in short, the corresponding specific form of state. This does not prevent the same economic basis - the same from the standpoint of its main conditions - due to innumerable different empirical circumstances, natural environment, racial relations external historical influences, etc., from showing infinite variations and gradations in appearance which can be ascertained only by analysis of the empirically given circumstances."⁶

In order to appreciate the significance of this passage for the study of social classes one must remember that for Marx any economy is resolved, in the final analysis into an economy of time where the production of the total social product may be divided into two proportions. On the one hand, there is what Marx called "necessary labour time", that is the time required for the direct producers to produce what is necessary for their own means of subsistence. On the other hand, there is what Marx called "surplus labour time", that is the time spent by the direct producers in producing the social surplus; ie., the amount over and above their own subsistence level. The surplus labour time provides the non-producers with their own means of subsistence as well as providing a portion of the social surplus which can be utilized for simple or extended reproduction of the total social product on a lesser or greater scale depending upon the specific structure of the production system and its corresponding level of social productivity.⁷

⁶K.Marx, Capital, Volume 3, (New York: International Publishers, fifth printing, 1973), p.791.

⁷This of course only represents a very general summary of Marx's conception of an economy of time. When we deal in more specific terms with this conception in relation to the C.M.P., we can then be more specific about such terms as direct producers and non-producers, etc. For a good discussion of Marx's conception of an economy of time see E.Mandel, The Formation of the Economic Thought of Karl Marx, Op.Cit., chapter 8. Mandel also has provided an interesting summary from an anthropological perspective of the historical origin and evolution of the social surplus product. See: E.Mandel, Marxist Economic Theory, (London:Merlin Press 1974), pp.23 48.

It was by viewing the economy from this perspective that Marx began to focus upon the specific forms in which "unpaid surplus labour is pumped out of the direct producers". In the "ancient mode of production" the master-slave relationship provides little difficulty in terms of determining the manner in which surplus labour is appropriated. In studying the feudal mode of production, the process is more complicated as Marx indicates in his analysis of the three economic forms of surplus labour appropriation (labour rent, rent in kind, money rent) and the extra-economic factors required for this surplus extraction process.⁸

However, the capitalist mode of production does not so readily reveal its 'inner organization' or its 'fundamental relations'. They appear shrouded by a "mystical veil" which masks the "innermost secret, the hidden basis of the entire social structure" and the corresponding role and nature of its "specific form of state". The formal freedom that characterizes the buying and selling of goods and services in a market society "appears as the surface process, beneath which, in the depths, entirely different processes go on, in which the apparant individual equality and liberty disappear."⁹ Because Marx maintained that "classes in turn are an empty phrase if I am not familiar with the elements on which they rest..."¹⁰ it becomes necessary in developing a general theory of social classes to unveil the processes and relations of this underlying reality and in so doing to arrive at a theoretical understanding of how and why the relations and processes appear to the members of bourgeois society as something other than they really

⁸ Several relevant examples of Marx's depiction of the surplus extraction process in the ancient mode of production can be found in K.Marx, *Capital*, Volume 2, *Op.Cit.*, pp.478-479 and Volume 3, *Op.Cit.*, pp.384-385. The most important discussion of this process in relation to the F.M.P. can be found in K.Marx, *Capital*, Vol.3, pp.782-813 (especially pp.792-794 for the role of extra-economic factors in the extraction process).

⁹ K.Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, edited by M.Nicolaus, (London:Penguin Books in association with New Left Review, 1973), p.247..

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.100.

are.¹¹ In undertaking this task Marx utilized a method which Maurice Dobb, Oscar Lange and others have referred to as the dialectical interplay of "economic sociology" and "economic analysis in the narrower more modern sense of the term".¹² For example, while the formulation of the workings of the law of value have often times a highly complex, formalistic and statistically based mode of presentation in Marx's work, they are also elucidated within a framework pertaining to the relations between individuals, groups and social classes, in terms of specific relations structures and functions.¹³ Thus, so as not to render Marx's conception of class "an empty phrase", our analysis must begin by providing a

¹¹ Marx also refers to this underlying reality as a "hidden substratum", "inner presence", "inner structure" or "inner mechanism". See K.Marx, Capital, Volume 1, Op.Cit., pp.542, 563; and Vol.3, p.168.

¹² M.Dobb, Theories of Value and Distribution Since Adam Smith: Ideology and Economic Theory, (Cambridge:Cambridge University Press, 1977), p.149. For a further specification of Marx's method in terms of what Paul Sweezy and others have called the method of "successive approximations", the movement from the highest levels of abstraction to the concrete, see: A.Swingewood, Marx and Modern Social Theory, Op.Cit., Chapter 2, "The Problem of Method" (especially pp.45-47.)

¹³ In referring back to the original passage with which we began this section, one should bear in mind that in discussing these laws and the manner in which they affect and in turn are affected by the relations, structures and functions pertaining to the C.M.P., Marx subscribed to the position that "the infinite variations and gradations in appearance" can only be ascertained "by analysis of the empirically given circumstances". Thus, while Marx's conception of social and economic laws are sometimes presented in a very deterministic manner ("working with iron necessity towards inevitable results". Capital, Vol.1, p.8), which was sometimes reinforced by the presentation of his work after his death by Engels (see in particular Engels' introduction to The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, Op.Cit., p.14), there are a number of important qualifications that both writers emphasized. For the nature of these qualifications in general on Marx's part see Capital, Vol.3, Op.Cit., p.175 and Grundrisse, Op.Cit., p.98. For their modification in relation to specifics concerning the conception of socially necessary labour time see Capital, Vol.1, pp.84, 188 and K.Marx, "Wages, Price and Profit" in K.Marx & F.Engels, Selected Works in One Volume (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1968), p.225. For Engels' qualifications see "Engels Letters to Heinz Starkenbusk (1894) and Joseph Bloch (1890)" in Selsam & Martel, Reader in Marxist Philosophy, Op.Cit., pp.201-206.

general summary of Marx's link between capitalist economic structure and the theory of value as it pertains to his theory of social classes.

For Marx, "the first category in which bourgeois wealth presents itself is that of the commodity. The commodity itself appears as the unity of two aspects". On the one hand as an object of satisfaction or utility the commodity has a 'use value'. On the other hand, as a specific product of capitalist production the commodity also has a value in terms of being exchangeable for other commodities on the market, and thus possesses an 'exchange value'.

"Although directly united in the commodity, use value and exchange value just as directly split apart. Not only does the exchange value not appear as determined by the use value, but rather, furthermore, the commodity only becomes a commodity, only realizes itself as exchange value, in so far as its owner does not relate to it as use value. He appropriates use values only through their sale, their exchange for other commodities. Appropriation through sale is the fundamental form of the social system of production, of which exchange value appears as the simplest most abstract expression."¹⁴

Thus as products of the C.M.P., commodities exhibit the properties of both utility and exchangeability. The common basis that they share is that of being products of human labour. As such commodities as values represent the embodiment of human labour power* and therefore "labour time is the intrinsic measure of value"¹⁵

¹⁴ K.Marx, Grundrisse, Op.Cit., p.881.

¹⁵ K.Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, edited by M.Dobb, (New York:International Publishers, 1972), p.84.

* For Marx "by labour power or capacity for labour is to be understood the aggregate of those mental and physical capabilities existing in a human being which he exercises whenever he produces a use-value of any description". (Capital, Vol.1, p.167). For Marx labour power when embodied in a commodity is referred to as "objectified labour". When labour-power is referred to in the context of the exchange between capitalists and workers it is referred to as "potential capacity for labour". Labour power is also referred to as 'abstract labour' as opposed to 'concrete labour', the latter representing specific forms of labour such as weaving, spinning, etc.

However, these aspects of the commodity only represent the first approximations necessary for a discussion of the law of value in an economy characterized by generalized commodity production. Marx goes on to show that in fact the value of a commodity is determined by the amount of socially necessary labour required for its production. The meaning of this conception and of the assumptions upon which it is based are discussed by Marx in the following terms.

"In saying that the value of a commodity is determined by the quantity of labour worked up or crystallized in it, we mean the quantity of labour necessary for its production in a given state of society, under certain social average conditions of production, with a given average intensity and average skill of the labour employed. When in England, the power loom came to compete with the handloom, only one half of the former time of labour was wanted to convert a given amount of yarn into a yard of cotton or cloth. The poor handloom weaver now worked seventeen or eighteen hours daily instead of the nine or ten hours he had worked before. Still the product of twenty hours of his labour represented now only ten social hours of labour, or ten hours of labour socially necessary for the conversion of a certain amount of yarn into textile stuffs. His product of twenty hours had, therefore, no more value than his former product of ten hours."¹⁶

Thus, socially necessary labour rather than individual expenditure of labour forms the basis of the creation of value.¹⁷ It is from this premise that the question "What determines socially necessary labour?" arises and the answer to this question brings us

¹⁶ K. Marx, "Wage Labour and Profit", Op.Cit., pp. 205-206.

¹⁷ The reader will bear in mind that this paper is not a discourse in Marxist economic theory. We utilize the theory only to the extent that it assists in unravelling Marx's theory of social classes. Our interpretation of such conceptions as socially necessary labour, the falling rate of profit, etc., should thus be understood as very general summaries and intricacies, specific details and qualifications that are involved can only be referred to in the context of references to various works that have dealt with these matters specifically.

to Marx's theory of the productivity of labour, the rate of exploitation, the formation of prices of production, the equalization of the rate of profit, and the corresponding tendency of the rate of profit to fall. However, in order to discuss these conceptions in relation to the theory of social classes, we must first return to the relation established by Marx between necessary and surplus labour in order to arrive at his conception of surplus value. According to Marx:

"Whatever the social form of production, labourers and means of production always remain factors of it. But in a state of separation from each other either of these factors can be such only potentially. For production to go on at all they must unite. The specific manner in which this union is accomplished distinguishes the different economic epochs of the structure of society from one another."¹⁸

In considering the C.M.P., there are of course a number of historical preconditions that are necessary before the particular capitalist consummation of this union can be achieved (separation of labourers from their means of production, expansion of the world market, etc.). However, presupposing these historical preconditions the central mechanism required for enjoining workers and means of production is the exchange process. In this process,

"The worker sells his commodity labour which has a use value, and as commodity, also a price, like all other commodities, for a specific sum of exchange values, specific sum of money, which capital concedes to him. The capitalist obtains labour itself, labour as value positing activity, as productive labour; i.e., he obtains the productive force which maintains and multiplies capital, and which thereby becomes the productive force the reproductive force of capital, a force belonging to capital itself."¹⁹

Labour being a commodity and therefore subject to the law of value, receives in this exchange a sum equal to the amount socially necessary for its production. Thus the exchange appears as one of

¹⁸ K.Marx, Capital, Volume 2, Op.Cit., p.34.

¹⁹ K.Marx, Grundrisse, Op.Cit., p.274.

equivalence in that the labourer receives from the capitalist the value of his labour power!²⁰

However, Marx goes on to point out that there is a distinct difference that must be drawn between the value of labour power and the value labour power creates. It only takes the labourer a portion of the working day to create the value of his own means of

²⁰ The conception of "socially necessary" has an important distinction that should be noted in terms of its application to labour power as opposed to other commodities. This distinction is contained in what Marx referred to as "the historical and moral element" that enter into the determination of the value of labour power:

"The value of the labouring power is formed by two elements - the one merely physical, the other historical or social. Its ultimate limit is determined by the physical element, that is to say, to maintain and reproduce itself, to perpetuate its physical existence, the working class must receive the necessaries absolutely indispensable for living and multiplying... Besides this mere physical element the value of labour is in every country determined by a traditional standard of life. It is not mere physical life, but it is the satisfaction of certain wants springing from the social conditions in which people are placed and reared up."

(K.Marx, "Wage, Price and Profit," Op.Cit., p.225.)

"On the other hand, the number and extent of his so-called necessary wants, as also the modes of satisfying them, are themselves the product of historical development and depend therefore to a great extent on the degree of civilization of a country, more particularly on the conditions under which and consequently on the habits and degree of comfort in which the class of free labourers has been formed. In contradistinction therefore to the case of other commodities there enters into the determination of the value of labour power a historical and moral element."

(K.Marx, Capital, Volume 1, Op.Cit., p.171.)

For a discussion of the theoretical implications of this point, see Maurice Dobb, Theories of Value and Distribution Since Adam Smith, Op.Cit., pp.152-153.

subsistence (necessary labour time) while in the remaining portion of the working day (surplus labour time) he creates value over and above his means of subsistence. Because the capitalist has purchased the use value of labour power for the entire working day, he has control over and the power to appropriate this surplus labour. It is this difference between necessary and surplus labour or between the value of labour power and the value created by labour power from which surplus value arises. It is for this reason that Marx points out "the bourgeois system of equivalents turns into appropriation without equivalent and is based on that".²¹

²¹ K. Marx, Grundrisse, Op.Cit., p.596. For decades now, this fundamental point that Marx made has been either misunderstood or grossly misrepresented. On the one hand there is the common charge that "Marx is caught up in the purely metaphysical problem of whether capital is barren or productive, whether interest or profit are a payment for services rendered or merely income stolen from the workers". From this perspective, Marx's economic theory is reduced to "emotive arguments about the nature of surplus value". (M. Blaug, Economic Theory in Retrospect, (New York, 1962, London:1964, pp.243, 247) quoted in M. Dobb, Theories of Value and Distribution Since Adam Smith, Op.Cit., p.145). Marx is not caught up in a purely metaphysical problem nor is he trying to provide an ethical foundation for his theory. Because, as Marx points out, "value does not stalk about with a label describing what it is" (Capital, Vol.1, p.74.), the value creating process must be explored and theoretically articulated in terms of its multiple complexities. Marx is not involved with some Proudhonian notion of property as theft, but with the important theoretical distinction between value of labour power and the value created by labour power. He is thus addressing himself at the same time to the important question of economic theory concerning whether the science of economics begins with its foundation in the process of production or in the sphere of circulation. At the same time the problem of value has important implications for practice: "Upon the basis of the wage system the value of labour power is settled like every other commodity; and as different kinds of labouring power have different values or require different quantities of labour for their production they must fetch different prices in the labour market. To clamour for equal or even equitable retribution on the basis of the wage system is the same as to clamour for freedom on the basis of the slavery system. What you think just or equitable is out of the question. The question is: What is necessary and unavoidable with a given system of production. Thus the value of labour power is determined by the value of the necessities required to produce, develop, maintain, and perpetuate labour power. (K. Marx, "Wage Price and Profit", Op.Cit., p.211.

Having arrived at a first approximation of Marx's notion of surplus value, we can now integrate this conception with that pertaining to the structure and functioning of the production process. In the 1844-52 period, Marx had theoretically articulated an analytic distinction between the two relationships that combine to make up the production process. (see pages 53-54). On the one hand there was the labour process in which men and women act upon nature, upon its raw materials, with specific instruments of production, in order to produce and appropriate specific goods and services. But in order for the labour process to be set in motion the workers had to be united with the means of production, a union that Marx articulated in terms of the property connection.

In the 1852-75 period, this combination is given greater substance through the utilization of Marx's concept of surplus value. Here we find Marx making the distinction between "the two fold nature of the process of production itself" in the following terms:

"The process of production, considered on the one hand as the unity of the labour process and the process of creating value, is production of commodities; considered on the other hand as the unity of the labour process and the process of producing surplus value, it is the capitalist process of production, or capitalist production of commodities."²²

Thus, on one hand there exists the labour process as a process in which use values are created. This process represents the combination of the following factors "the elementary factors of the labour process are 1) the personal activity of man i.e. work itself; 2) the subject of that work; and 3) its instruments."²³ These elements form the production relations of the labour process. On the other hand, the C.M.P., as a surplus value producing process, is characterized by, or may be represented as having, production relations upon which the surplus value producing process rests.²⁴ Although this second set of production relations is primarily

²² K. Marx Capital, Vol. 1, Op.Cit., p. 197.

²³ Ibid., p. 178.

²⁴ For a similar interpretation of this idea in regards to Marx's work, and for an important theoretical extension of this point in

defined by Marx in terms of the property connection between owners and non-owners of the means of production; it will now be shown that he provided a far more involved theoretical articulation of these surplus value production relations. In doing so he developed important innovations in his theory of social classes which enabled him to articulate a fundamentally new theory concerning the reproduction of the relations of production in terms of specific patterns of class formation, their functional determination, and their restructuration through class conflict and other peripheral conflict based cleavages.

In terms of presenting these innovations and interpreting their significance for his theory of social classes we will focus on three important features. In terms of class formation we will begin at the economic level by 1) focusing on the transformation of the structure of positions within the combined use and surplus value creating processes. 2) We will then show how Marx articulated this process of class formation in terms of the functional determination of these positions. 3) We will then proceed to demonstrate how Marx conceived the restructuration of the process of class formation through the intervention or mediation of ideological, political, and economic class conflict as well as other peripheral conflict based cleavages.²⁵

Marx's conception of the process of class formation may be posited initially as mentioned previously as the transformation

relation to the middle class, see G.Carchedi, "On the Economic Identification of the New Middle Class", Economy and Society, (Vol.4, 1975).

²⁵ In order to facilitate the mode of presentation, we will, as mentioned previously, make extensive use of footnotes in order to provide appropriate specifications concerning Marx's economic theory. These footnotes can only provide "successive approximations" of Marx's economic theory of capitalism given the self imposed limits of this study. The restructuration of class formation through ideological, political class conflict will be discussed in the second section of this chapter. Here we are concerned primarily with the economic level.

of the structure of positions within the combined use value and surplus value creating processes. However, in order to give theoretical substance to this proposition, in order to make it concrete, one must remember as Marx was fond of pointing out, "the concrete is concrete because it is the concentration of many determinations"²⁶ And in order to theoretically articulate the nature of these determinations Marx placed them within a remolded, rearticulated conception of totality:

"The conception we reach is not that production, distribution; exchange and consumption are identical, but that they all form the members of a totality, distinctions within a unity. Production predominates not only over itself, in the antithetical definition of production, but over the other moments as well. The process always returns to production to begin anew. That exchange and consumption cannot be predominant is self evident. Likewise, distribution as distribution of products; while as distribution of the agents of production it is itself a moment of production. A definite production thus determines a definite consumption, distribution and exchange as well as definite relations between these different moments. Admittedly, in its one-sided form, production is itself determined by the other moments. For example, if the market, ie., the sphere of exchange, expands then production grows in quantity and the divisions between its different branches become deeper. A change in distribution changes production, eg., concentration of capital, different distribution of the population between town and country, etc.... Mutual interaction takes place between the different moments. This is the case with every organic whole."²⁷

This conception of totality does not in this context concern the base/superstructure relation, but rather the economic structure of the mode of production itself. It corresponds to another proposition that Marx put forward where he suggested, "the totality of these relations of production constitute the economic structure of society, the real foundation on which arises a legal and political superstructure"²⁸.

²⁶ K.Marx, Grundrisse, Op.Cit., p.101.

²⁷ Ibid., p.99.

²⁸ K.Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, Op.Cit., p.20.

In terms of its application to Marx's conception of class formation, this conception of totality suggests two important points. The first point, as Carchedi has emphasized, concerns the fact that Marx appears to be using the concept of determination in two different ways. The determination of the production relations by the exchange, distribution and consumption relations is something distinctly different from the determination of these same exchange, distribution and consumption relations by the production relations. Essentially, while the production relations are viewed as determinant, the other relations are viewed as overdeterminant, that is to say, for Marx, the production relations (as the combined unity of the use value and surplus value creating processes in terms of their respective sets of production relations) determine or establish the framework in which the distribution, exchange and consumption relations will exercise their corresponding relatively autonomous degree of effectivity upon the production relations themselves. As Carchedi has put it, "The determination of the production relations by the distribution relations is not the same thing as the determination of the latter by the former. In short, while to be overdetermined means to be modified and affected, to be determined means to be called into existence as a precondition for the existence of the determinant instance."²⁹

Thus, while the process of class formation represents the concentration of many determinants, the production relations are viewed as the determinant element while the other relations are viewed as essentially overdeterminant.³⁰ However, Marx also points

²⁹ G. Carchedi, "On the Economic Identification of the New Middle Class," *Op.Cit.*, p.70.

³⁰ The concept of overdetermination was first formulated in regards to Marx's own work by Louis Althusser. Although we would agree with Althusser that the concept appears implicitly in Marx's theoretical formulations, we use it here with several reservations. In the first place, there is a tendency among Marxist theoreticians to make indiscriminant use of such concepts as mediation and overdetermination. They are too often used in the form of an act

out in the same passage that distribution considered as the distribution of the agents of production must also be considered as a moment of production and thus an important determinant of the process of class formation:

"In the shallowest conception, distribution appears as the distribution of products, and hence as further removed from and quasi independent of production. But before distribution can be the distribution of products it is: 1) the distribution of the instruments of production, and 2) which is a further specification of the same relation, the distribution of the members of the society among the different kinds of production (subsumption of the individuals under specific relations of production). The distribution of products is evidently only a result of this distribution, which is comprised within the process of production. To examine production while disregarding this internal distribution within it is obviously an empty abstraction; while conversely the distribution of products follows by itself from this distribution which forms an original moment of production."³¹

For Marx the distribution of the means of production and the agents of production was first and foremost an essentially historical process. It forms the very basis of his notion of class as a historical relationship. In his discussion of the transition from the F.M.P. to the C.M.P., Marx discussed the evolution of this two fold form of distribution in terms of what he called primitive accumulation, which in simplified terms Marx asserted as being "nothing less than the historical process of

of theoretical closure where the concept is substituted for the explanation of a theoretical problem that has yet to be fully examined in regards to the multiple complexities that it exhibits (see for example B.Hindes and P.Hirst, Pre-capitalist Modes of Production, London, 1975). Marx, for example, explicitly warned his readers against utilizing the concept of mediation in this way, and argued that it could never substitute for rigorous theoretical and empirical work. (See Capital, Vol.3, p.324 footnote) We have found it useful to use the term here only to facilitate our mode of presentation, and only to the extent that Marx himself appears to imply its usage at the highest level of theoretical abstraction.

³¹ K.Marx, Grundrisse, Op.Cit., p.96.

divorcing the producer from the means of production.³²

Marx's study of primitive accumulation is essentially the study of the historical process of class formation. It involved the study of the breakdown of the guild structure, the abolition of serfdom, the enclosure movement and the commercialization of agriculture, and the appearance of different forms of wage labour in proportion to the generalization of commodity production and the corresponding expansion of the world market. The analysis was essentially three fold in that it depicted 1) the transformation of the structure of positions as they existed within the production process of the F.M.P. to those that developed within the production process of the C.M.P.; 2) the transformation of the recruitment process or distribution mechanism utilized for filling these positions, and the corresponding difference between the surplus extraction processes. (Because of the existence of the parcellization of sovereignty in the F.M.P., both the distribution mechanism and the surplus extraction processes were based upon tradition and extra-economic coercion. In the C.M.P., they both rested according to Marx essentially upon the market mechanism); 3) The transformation of "the mode of life" of the different classes under the F.M.P. and the C.M.P., which corresponded to the different processes involved in the subsumption of individuals under definite ideological, political and economic class relations. (This refers essentially to the cultural component of class formation which Marx depicted mainly in terms of the transformation of personal relationships of domination and subordination into impersonal atomized relationships of domination and subordination.)

However, our analysis is concerned primarily with the process of class formation within social formations already characterized by

³²K.Marx, Capital, Volume 1, Op.Cit., p.714.

the presence of the C.M.P.. As such, we are not concerned with the genesis of the structuration of class formation during the transition from the F.M.P. to the C.M.P. but rather with the manner in which the various relations and processes of the C.M.P. develop and combine to structure class formation. For this reason, our analysis must continue by focusing on these two fold distribution processes in terms of the surplus value creating and realization processes.³³

³³ There are perhaps two points that should be mentioned in regards to Marx's historical conception of class formation as it pertains to the transition from the F.M.P. to the C.M.P.. The first point concerns the claim by the Weberian and other non-Marxist traditions that feudal society must be conceived as a "pre-class" society based on the following characteristics: 1) the allocation of occupational tasks is regulated and established on a traditionally based form of ascription rather than achievement or performance; 2) the economy is localized and there is a fusion of the political and economic spheres of power; 3) relations of domination and subordination are personalized and the pattern of group formation arises primarily through kinship affiliation. (See: A. Giddens, The Class Structure of Advanced Societies, Op.Cit., pp.132-135) Marx also noted these factors in his discussion of feudal society but rather than viewing them as factors of pre class formation, he saw them in relation to capitalist society as essentially different factors between two class societies. For Marx it is not the existence or nonexistence of the capitalist market which determines whether or not a society is a class society or not (as is essentially the case for Weberians); but rather Marx maintained that it is the manner in which surplus labour is extracted from the direct producers which determines whether or not a society is a class society. And the surplus extraction process does not depend in the last instance upon the structure of the market, but rather upon the structure of the mode of production itself

The second point tends to follow from the first and concerns the process of class formation during the transition from the F.M.P. to the C.M.P.. According to Zygmunt Bauman (the example here involves Britain, but the proposition elaborated by Bauman has become a general principle for many scholars concerned with the transition from the F.M.P. to the C.M.P.): "New classes arose not from the old classes but as if from a pliable mass of humanity created out of the traditional social strata as a result of the industrial revolution." (Z. Bauman, Between Class and Elite: The Evolution of the British Labour Movement, Op.Cit., p.5). Marx's conception of historical class formation opposes this conception and posits in its place a conception of a transitional form of class formation. In this conception new classes do not arise

Marx's theory of class formation at the economic level arises out of the creation of surplus value (in the production process) and the realization of surplus value (in the circulation process). As Marx himself expressed it: "The result of this process of production and realization is above all the reproduction and new production of the relation of capital and labour itself, of capitalist and worker. This social relation, production relation, appears in fact as an even more important result of the process than its material results."³⁴ In this respect the laws that Marx articulated concerning capitalist competition and capitalist accumulation form the very basis upon which his theory of class formation at the economic level rests. It is precisely by presenting a brief summation of the workings of these laws that we can abstract those factors that determine the process of class formation at the economic level. And the abstraction process itself begins with Marx's conception of the organic composition of capital.

For Marx the organic composition of capital represents the

from a "pliable mass of humanity", but rather they arise from the old classes through the redistribution of the "agents of production" from one set of class relations to another set of class relations. This redistribution of agents allows the newly created positions in the production process to be filled and expanded, and also involves the redistribution of functions that are attached to these positions. (see for example Capital, Vol.3, Op.Cit., pp.334-335). However, this is only the transitional form of class formation at the economic level. This does not imply a direct correspondence to the process of class formation at the political and ideological levels. It is precisely the possibility of a disjuncture between the various levels of class formation that renders the concept problematic. We will discuss this disjuncture and its implications for "the disaggregation of classes" as it concerns Marx's theory of social classes in the following section of this paper.

³⁴ K.Marx, Grundrisse, Op.Cit., p.458.

ratio that obtains between constant capital (means of production, i.e., raw materials, instruments of labour, etc.) and variable capital (wages advanced to secure the utilization of labour power). In his analysis of the transition from the earliest forms of manufacturing to what he called the advanced development of "modern industry" Marx noted that with the increasing mechanization of industry the organic composition of capital tended to rise, and this rise corresponded not only to the increasing social productivity of labour but also to a tendency for the rate of profit to fall.³⁵

By increasing productivity of labour, Marx meant: "... an alteration in the labour process of such a kind as to shorten the labour time socially necessary for the production of a commodity and to endow a given quantity of labour with the power of producing a greater quantity of use value."³⁶ Although an increase in the productivity of labour in general corresponds to an increase in the organic composition of capital, these changes themselves depend essentially upon the increase in the mass of surplus value.³⁷ And, for Marx, the mass of surplus value increased

³⁵ K.Marx, Capital, Vol.3, pp.142-153 and Vol.2, p.216.

³⁶ K.Marx, Capital, Volume 1, Op.Cit., p.314.

³⁷ The concept of the organic composition of capital is derived initially from the general formula that Marx presented as that representing the value of a commodity: $C = c + v + s$, where c = constant capital, v = variable capital, and s = surplus value. From this formula Marx also derived the formula for the rate of profit ($s/c+v$) and the "simple rate of surplus value" (s/v) or the "rate of exploitation" (For Marx the "annual rate" of surplus value is equal to s/v multiplied by the number of times that v as expenditure of wages turned over per annum. As M.Dobb pointed out, it was from this that he calculated the annual rate of profit. See M.Dobb, Theories of Value and Distribution Since Adam Smith, Op.Cit., p.155). For Marx, although v is the value creating component being the representation of labour power, it serves a "dual function" in that besides creating value (through what Marx called living labour), it also transfers the value of the labour embodied in the c component (what Marx called "dead" or "stored up" labour) to the commodity in whole or part depending on such factors as the value and quantity of the raw materials used, the depreciation rate of machinery, etc.. As one writer has summarised it, "By value of a commodity, Marx meant the quantity of labour socially necessary for the production of that

through what he termed as increasing absolute or increasing relative surplus value. The increase in absolute surplus value is what characterized the development of the C.M.P. up until the stage of "modern industry".³⁸ The process essentially involves the increase of the length of the working day without a corresponding compensation for wages, that is, necessary labour time remains constant while surplus labour time is increased. Marx maintained that this process is limited in that as a form of the intensification of labour, it can only proceed to a certain level before endangering the physical survival of the working class. And, perhaps more importantly, as Marx pointed out, it is limited historically by the development of the class struggle: "The creation of a normal working day is therefore the product of a protracted civil war, more or less dissembled between the capitalist class and the working class."³⁹ It was out of this phase of the class struggle that the intervention of the state was brought about resulting in the enactment of legislation that shortened or

commodity. The value or quantity of labour includes of course not only the labour directly used in the production of the commodity, but also the labour used indirectly in its production or in other words, the labour required to produce the means of production used up in the direct labour process. This latter labour in turn includes the labour directly used in the production of the means of production and the labour required to produce the means of production used in making them. Continuing this process backwards through time (always 'resolving' the labour embodied in the means of production into direct labour and further labour embodied on the means of production), we then see the value of a commodity as made up of a sequence of expenditures of labour spread [backwards] through time." (Ian Steedman, "Value, Price and Profit", New Left Review, (#90), p.73.

³⁸ For Marx's definitions of relative and absolute surplus value see K. Marx, Capital, Volume 1, Op.Cit., p.316.

³⁹ Ibid., p.299.

fixed^{the} limit to the working day itself. Although other means of increasing absolute surplus value through the intensification of labour can occur within a fixed working day,⁴⁰ Marx suggested that this historic intervention of the state in fixing the limit to the normal working day necessitated that the capitalist class should find other means of pumping surplus value out of the direct producers. The fundamental means of doing so resulted in the production of relative surplus value.

While the creation of absolute surplus value involves maintaining the necessary labour time constant while increasing the surplus labour time, the increase of relative surplus value involves within a fixed working day the shortening of necessary labour time and thus a proportional increase in surplus labour time. This involves an increase in the social productivity of labour so that the labour socially necessary to produce the means of subsistence is reduced with the value of commodities thus becoming cheaper, resulting therefore in a relative cheapening of the value of labour power itself.⁴¹

⁴⁰ See Ibid., pp.409-418 and E.Mandel, Marxist Economic Theory, Op.Cit., pp.135-142.

⁴¹ It should be noted that in making his formulations, Marx was working within specified assumptions. The fundamental assumption he utilized in the first two volumes of Capital and in parts of volume three (and the one around which much of the debate on his economic theory has focused) was the conditional assumption that on the average commodities are sold at their real value. This of course raises the question of the relation between price and value. In explaining what he called "the quantitative incongruity between magnitude of the value and price" (Capital, Vol.1, p.102), Marx suggested in regards to commodities that "their value is the centre of gravity around which prices fluctuate, and their continual rises and drops tend to equalize". (Capital, Volume 3, p.178) Thus, "the law of value regulates the price of production" (Capital, Vol. 3, p.180) "in the last instance" (Capital, Vol.3, pp.208-209). The following proposition advanced by Marx is instructive of his meaning of the above statements: "The surplus labour is not entirely realized if only for the reason that due to a continual change in the amount of labour socially necessary to produce a certain com-

For Marx the increase in relative surplus value mainly through the utilization of machinery and other labour saving techniques, makes possible the realization of a greater mass of surplus value for the capitalist class as well as affording the possibility for a higher standard of living for the working class. However, the increase and realization of relative surplus value is dependent on the functioning of the laws of capitalist competition and accumulation as they affect the equalization of the rate of profit, the tendency for the rate of profit to fall, and the corresponding development of the concentration and centralization of capital. And, the working of these tendential laws, according to Marx, was largely dependent on the development of the class struggle itself.

The different industries that operate on the basis of the capitalist mode of production will, depending on a variety of circumstances (level of the organic composition of capital, amount of time required for the circulation of commodities, etc.), establish and realize different rates of profit during the course of their activities. However, Marx pointed out that the establishment of their respective rates of profit is not an arbitrary phenomenon. It is regulated by the competitive market mechanism which (given, as Marx pointed out, the historical emergence of a high degree of capital and labour mobility) dictates the emergence of an average rate of profit. This equalization of the rate of profit that Marx discussed has been summarised by Ernest Mandel in the following terms:

modity, resulting from the constant change in the productiveness of labour, some commodities are always produced under abnormal condition and must therefore be sold below their individual value." (Capital, Volume 3, p.833). For a discussion of this point and also what has become known as the "Transformation Problem" involving price and value see M.Dobb, Theories of Value and Distribution Since Adam Smith, Op.Cit., pp.155-165.

"The equalization of the rate of profit in the capitalist mode of production thus results from the ebb and flow of capital which flows into the sectors where profits are higher than the average and out of the sectors where profits are lowest. The ebbing of capital reduces production, creates a shortage of goods in the given branch, and so leads to an increase in prices and profits. The influx of capital, on the contrary, causes intensified competition in the sectors affected, resulting in a fall of prices and profits. Thus an average rate of profit is attained in all the sectors through competition in capital and commodities."⁴²

For Marx, this establishment of an average rate of profit is both a cause and consequence of the further increase in the organic composition of capital (the relative increase or substitution of expenditures on constant capital over variable capital or, as Marx called it, the increase of dead labour over live labour). And an increase in the organic composition of capital by increasing labour productivity increases the mass of surplus value which in capitalized form represents an increase in capital accumulation.⁴³ However, this very process also results in the tendency for the rate of profit to fall. As one writer has summarized it,

"Marx contended that the 'organic composition of capital', the ratio of constant capital (raw materials and capital equipment) and variable capital (the amount of live labour used in production) would rise over time as capitalists employed new methods of production to save labour costs and

⁴² E. Mandel, Marxist Economic Theory, Op.Cit., p.158. For Marx's discussion of the equalization and formation of the average rate of profit see K. Marx, Capital, Volume 3, pp.154-199.

⁴³ It should be noted that Marx divided the mass of surplus value into a number of distinct and analytically separable categories: On the one hand, profit, rent and interest represent the main divisions that he made corresponding to the different forms of capital (industrial, commercial, financial). Thus the mass of surplus value is appropriated, divided and transferred in different portions to the different fractions of capitalist class. The importance of these divisions was emphasized by Engels who pointed out that volume three of Capital was largely a theoretical exposition that assisted Marx in arriving at "an understanding of the laws of the distribution of surplus value within the capitalist class" which of course has important implications for the relations within and between social classes (Capital, Vol.2, p.10). Marx also divides surplus value into capital and revenue. It is from the revenue category that the capitalist class derive their incomes. This revenue category also is utilized for payments to unproductive labour (of which more will be

increase their competitiveness. The capitalists' profit, however, is based on the surplus value that they derive from the total value added by live labour alone in the process of production. Hence, if constant capital rises while the rate of exploitation - the surplus value derived from variable capital of live labour - remains unchanged, the capitalists' rate of profit, his return relative to his total expenditure, will tend to fall over time, although Marx was careful to draw attention to the fact that the same influences which produce a tendency in the general rate of profit to fall, also call forth counter effects." 44

said later) and other factors such as the payments of dividends in joint stock companies. That portion of surplus value not deducted from the revenue represents the amount that can be capitalized or reinvested. It is the different forms of capitalizing surplus value that Marx defines as capital accumulation. (Capital, Volume 1, p.579). For Marx, capital accumulation therefore involves both the production and realization processes.

44. Leo Panitch, "Profits and Politics: Labour and the Crisis of British Capitalism", unpublished paper presented to the conference on British studies, Claremont, California, April 16, 1977, p.6.

In simplified form, the rise in the organic composition of capital and the tendential fall in the rate of profit, with the rate of exploitation remaining constant, may be seen in the following manner:

	1.	2.	3.
Commodity Value (C)	600	700	800
Constant Capital (c)	400	500	600
Variable Capital (v)	100	100	100
Surplus Value (s)	100	100	100
Organic Composition of Capital (c/v)	4/1	5/1	6/1
Rate of Exploitation (s/v)	1/1	1/1	1/1
Rate of Profit -percentage- (s/c+v)	20.0%	16.6%	14.2%

$$(C = c + v + s)$$

Marx maintained that 6 factors could act as "counteracting influences" on the tendency of the rate of profit to fall: increasing intensity of exploitation, depression of wages below the value of labour power, relative over population, cheapening of the elements of constant capital, foreign trade, and increase of stock capital. (Capital, Volume 1, Op.Cit., pp.232-240) These examples that he gave emphasized among other things that a fall in the rate of profit does not necessarily (or usually) correspond to a fall in the mass of profits because the increasing concentration and centralization of capital, accompanied by increasing labour productivity, results in a smaller rate of profit on a much larger total social capital so that both the mass of profits and surplus value will rise even though the rate of profit may fall. For

In the process of studying the tendential fall of the rate of profit and the workings of the other tendential laws that characterize the C.M.P., Marx during the 1852-75 period was able to make a number of substantial contributions and alterations to the conceptual apparatus that he had developed during the 1844-52 period. The concept of surplus value, the organic composition of capital, the equalization and tendential fall of the rate of profit, the concept of capital accumulation and the concept of the rate of surplus value, which provided an exact way of measuring one aspect of the exploitation of the working class, were all important innovations in this respect. And the somewhat vague but implicit conception of overdetermination as well as the gradual elimination of the notion of absolute immiseration, provided significant alterations in his conception of totality and economic development respectively.

However, his analysis was far from being concerned with pure economic laws as such. For Marx always maintained that the functioning of these laws "is only settled by the continuous struggle between capital and labour" and in this respect "the matter resolves itself into a question of the respective powers of the combatants".⁴⁵ It is for this reason that in Marx's theory of social classes the process of class formation at the economic, political and ideological levels becomes of critical importance.

There are two important factors that must be dealt with initially concerning what we have termed Marx's formulation of class formation at the economic level. The first concerns the transformation of the structure of positions within the production

a critique of this aspect of Marx's theory see Joan Robinson, An Essay in Marxian Economics, (London: Macmillan, 1974), chapter 5: "The Falling Rate of Profit"; and Ian Steedman, Value, Price and Profit, Op.Cit., p.76.

⁴⁵ K.Marx, Wage Price and Profit, Op.Cit., p.226.

process and the redistribution of the agents required to fill these positions as well as the redistribution of the means of production. This process involves the restructuration of class formation through the concentration and centralization of capital as it pertains to class positions characteristic of the C.M.P. as well as those that continued to exist through what Marx, in the 1844-52 period, had referred to as "the conservation of old modes of production". The second concerns the reproduction of a structure of positions outside the production process which, according to Marx, are technically and functionally necessary for the reproduction of those conditions necessary for the functioning of the C.M.P. itself. This concerns the progressive production of the industrial reserve army of labour.

In his discussion of the "general law of capitalist accumulation". Marx pointed out:

"Every individual capital is a larger or smaller concentration of means of production, with a corresponding command over a larger or smaller labour army ... Accumulation increases the concentration of... the social means of production... and thereby widens the basis of production on a large scale and also the specific methods of capitalist production ... centralization proper, as distinct from accumulation and concentration ... is concentration of capitals already formed, destruction of their individual independence, expropriation of capitalist by capitalist, transformation of many small into few large capitals."46

It can be suggested that for Marx the three processes of concentration, accumulation and centralization are the fundamental processes that alter the structure of positions within the economy as a whole. And these processes are mainly made operative through competition and credit.⁴⁷

Marx emphasized that it is mainly through competition that

⁴⁶ K.Marx, Capital, Vol.1, Op.Cit., pp.625-626.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p.626.

commodities are cheapened, and this cheapening is dependent on both the increased productiveness of labour and the increased scale at which production is carried on. Concentration which is another term Marx employed for reproduction on an extended scale increases the necessary minimum of capital required to start and to operate a business under normal conditions. Thus, entry into the various branches of production requires a greater capital outlay not only on larger facilities and other forms of capital equipment, but also on the acquisition of methods needed to produce competitively.⁴⁸ In the process involving the equalization of the rate of profit many "small and medium sized capitals" are unable to attain the average rate of profit and are thus driven out of business. As the organic composition of capital increases, the rate of profit tends to fall which reinforces this tendency of destroying the smaller capitalists as they can only realize profits at the lower profit rate owing to their lack of capital concentration which reduces the scale on which they can participate. In summarizing these points, Marx emphasizes how this reflects the functioning of the law of value:

"A drop in the rate of profit is attended by a rise in the minimum capital required by an individual capitalist for the productive employment of labour; required both for its exploitation generally, and for making the consumed labour time suffice as the labour time necessary for the production of the commodities, so that it does not exceed the average social labour time required for the production of the commodities. Concentration increases simultaneously, because beyond certain limits a large capital with a small rate of profit accumulates faster than a small capital with a large rate of profit. At a certain point this increasing concentration

⁴⁸ K.Marx, Capital, Volume 3. Op.Cit., pp.246,265.

in its turn causes a new fall in the rate of profit. The mass of small dispersed capitals is thereby driven along the adventurous road of speculation, credit frauds, stock swindles and crises." 49

The constant pressure exerted through the market by the dictates of the amount of labour socially necessary for the production of commodities, thus performs the dual role of eliminating various capitalist enterprises already involved in production, and preventing others from entering into production, thus forcing them to fold or "crowd into spheres of production which Modern Industry has only sporadically or incompletely got hold of."⁵⁰

This process results in two forms or methods of centralization. The first, "by the violent method of annexation", arises as various capitalist firms are destroyed through competition resulting in bankruptcies or forced takeovers. The second form of centralization occurs "by the smoother process" of the formation and organization of joint stock companies, which results in "an enormous expansion of the scale of production and the enterprises than was possible for individual capitals."⁵¹

The increased concentration, centralization and accumulation that accompanies the development of industrial capital also effects the other forms of capital and the respective composition of the various fractions of the capitalist class. The credit institutions

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp.250-251.

⁵⁰ K.Marx, Capital, Vol.1, Op.Cit., p.626.

⁵¹ K.Marx, Capital, Vol.3, Op.Cit., pp.627,436. For Marx's discussion of joint stock companies see Ibid., pp.435-441. A very interesting discussion of the controversy that surrounds Marx's notion of joint stock companies as an important form of "the abolition of the capitalist mode of production within the capitalist mode of production itself" can be found in the appendix to M.Zeitlin, "Corporate Ownership and Control: The Large Corporations and the Capitalist Class", American Journal of Sociology, (Vol.79, #5, 1974).

increase in size, as does the magnitude of their share in surplus value. This form of concentration and centralization is technically and functionally necessary for the development of the C.M.P. (and becomes more so with the increase in the supply of savings) so as to afford the necessary financing of reproduction on an extended scale. According to Marx, the "superstructure of credit" plays an important role in the equalization of the rate of profit by assisting in the financing of the various ventures of industrial capital, thus enhancing capital mobility by facilitating the ebb and flow of capital in and out of the high profit branches of industry.⁵² This same process exercises its effect on commercial capital and in fact does so at an earlier period in the development of the C.M.P. in that its historical appearance predates that of industrial capital.⁵³

This process of concentration, accumulation and centralization alters the structure of the C.M.P. by altering the combined unity of the forces and relations of production. This can be seen in the process of class formation at the economic level through the changing structure of positions occupied by the members of the different social classes. In the capitalist class, Marx points out: "With the growth of material wealth, the class of money-capitalists grows; on the one hand, the number and the wealth of retiring capitalists, rentiers, increases; and on the other hand, the development of the credit system is promoted, thereby increasing the number of bankers, money-lenders, financiers, etc."⁵⁴

Marx also indicates that the structure of positions occupied by the owners of industrial capital grows although concentration and centralization results in the transfer of some of these capitalists to the increasing structure of positions associated

⁵² Ibid., p.435.

⁵³ Ibid., p.295

⁵⁴ Ibid., p.50.

with "management and supervision".⁵⁵

Although Marx also discussed the changing structure of positions associated with the owners of commercial capital and the growth of new forms of capitalist enterprise such as insurance companies, his analysis of the new structure of positions occupied by the capitalist class remained somewhat sketchy and incomplete. His analysis does suggest, however, that increased concentration, centralization and accumulation, by separating a number of small and medium sized capitalists from their ownership and control of the means of production, and redistributing these means of production so that they become amalgamated on a larger scale in such forms as joint stock companies, results in a further consolidation of the capitalist class at the economic level.

The same processes that alter the structure of positions occupied by members of the capitalist class also operate to subordinate pre-capitalist economic formations to the workings of the C.M.P.. According to Marx, the generalization of commodity production continues to alter the character of these pre-capitalist class relations, most notably in terms of agricultural production. This infiltration of agricultural production by the C.M.P. produces the following results:

"The actual tillers of the soil [become] wage labourers employed by a capitalist, the capitalist farmer who is engaged in agriculture merely as a particular field of exploitation for capital, as investment for his capital in a particular sphere of production. The capitalist farmer pays the landowner, the owner of the land exploited by him, a sum of money at definite periods fixed by contract, for instance annually (just as the borrower of money capital pays a fixed interest) for the right to invest his capital in this specific sphere of production. This sum of money is called ground rent, no matter whether it is paid for agricultural land, building lots, mines, fishing grounds or forests, etc.. It is paid for the entire time for which the landowner has

⁵⁵Ibid., p 387.

contracted to rent his land to the capitalist farmer. Ground rent, therefore, is here that form in which property in land is realized economically, that is, produces value. Here, then, we have all three classes - wage labourers, industrial capitalists, and the landowners - constituting together, and in their mutual opposition, the framework of modern society."⁵⁶

The continuing commercialization of agriculture, which results in the emergence of a new structure of positions occupied by the capitalist farmer, also alters the process of class formation at the economic level involving the traditional subordinate classes. According to Marx, the traditional rural inhabitants are gradually separated from their means of production which are redistributed amongst the landlords and the independent capitalist farmers. The "rationalization of agriculture" requires large scale farming operations and as the number of small farms decreases and the acreage of large farms increases, the former serfs, bondsmen and the villeins are redistributed amongst the new positions now created by the emergence of large scale agricultural production. Marx also notes that the structure of positions occupied by these newly transformed agricultural day labourers will decrease in relative terms as the mechanization of agriculture develops and as manufacturing and modern industry expands. Thus continues the drift of the agricultural population into the increasing structure of positions that develop in the urban industrial areas.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ K. Marx, Capital, Volume 3, Op.Cit., p.618.

⁵⁷ K. Marx, Capital, Vol.1, Op.Cit., pp.673-696, and K. Marx, Theories of Surplus Value, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), p.219.

In regards to the process of class formation at the economic level it is important to take note of the following passage in Capital: "...the cheapness of the articles produced by machinery and the improved means of transport and communication furnish the weapons for conquering foreign markets. By ruining handicraft production in other countries, machinery forcibly converts them into fields for the supply of its raw materials. In this way East India was compelled to produce cotton, wool, hemp, jute and indigo for Great Britain.... A new and international division of labour, a division suited to the requirements of the chief centres

It is mainly within these urban industrial areas that the structure of positions created by "modern industry" is filled by the distribution of the agents of the working class. Although Marx's analysis of the changing occupational structure of industry is of interest, here we are only concerned with how the processes of concentration, centralization and accumulation result in the transformation of the structure of positions amongst which the members of working class are distributed. In this respect the following passage provides a good summary:

"As the constant capital grows, so also does the proportionate quantity of the total labour which is engaged in its reproduction. Nevertheless, the part of the population directly producing means of subsistence, although its number declines, produces more products than before. Its labour is more productive. While for the individual capital the fall in the variable part of the capital as compared with the constant part takes the direct form of a reduction in the part of the capital expended in wages, for the total capital - in its reproduction - this necessarily takes the form of that a relatively greater part of the labour employed is engaged in the reproduction of the means of production than is engaged

of modern industry springs up and converts one part of the globe into a chiefly agricultural field of production, for supplying the other part which remains a chiefly industrial field". (Capital, Volume 1, p.451), This of course raises the very important question of the process of class formation as it is effected at the international level by the structure of relations that pertain to the functioning of the world market. In general it is fair to suggest that Marx's analysis provides us with very little that would be useful for developing and interpreting his conception of class formation at the international level. However, the reason for this is not a matter of him having been oblivious to the theoretical implications involved, but rather it is essentially circumstantial. Apparently Marx had originally planned to save his discussion of the world market for what was to be the sixth volume of the work that began with the writing of Capital. However, illness, lack of funds, and the amount of time consumed by the writing of the first three volumes of Capital and The Theories of Surplus Value, prevented Marx from accomplishing this task. (See M.Nicolaus's introductory essay to K.Marx, Grundrisse, Op.Cit., pp.52-56). For this reason our discussion of class formation has not involved the world market except by way of a few general remarks. For an interesting discussion of the importance of studying class formation in relation to the world market, see I.Wallerstein, "Class Formation in the Capitalist World Economy", Politics and Society, (Vol.5.#3, 1975).

in the production of products themselves; that is, in the reproduction of machinery (including means of communication and transport and buildings) of auxiliary materials (coal, gas, oil, tallow, leather belting, etc.) and of plants which form the raw materials for industrial products."⁵⁸

Thus, for Marx, the rise in the organic composition of capital not only results in the increase of a structure of positions required for operating the means of production of modern industry, but also a new structure of positions emerges and increases in proportion to the former requiring the reproduction of the means of production as well as their servicing (engineers, mechanics, etc.). With the equalization and tendential fall in the rate of profit and the increase in the concentration and centralization of capital, these positions within the production process are extended not only in the industrial sphere but also in the agricultural sphere: "...to those engaged in machine construction, railway construction, mining and excavation" and to "...those employed in producing chemical and mineral methods for fertilizers" as well as the capital equipment used in agriculture.⁵⁹

For Marx, it is this very process of concentration, centralization and accumulation (both primitive and extended accumulation) that gave birth and structured the embryonic form of the modern industrial working class. And in its advanced stages, these same processes in a dialectical fashion resulted in both the consolidation and fragmentation of the internal unity of this class. However, our discussion of the consolidation and fragmentation of the unity of the working class requires a discussion of a number of other factors involved in the process of class formation. Before turning to these we must introduce the structure of positions created by the C.M.P. that are occupied by the industrial reserve army of labour. The importance that Marx attached to this "relative surplus

⁵⁸ K. Marx, Theories of Surplus Value, Vol. 1, Op.Cit., p.219.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p.219.

population" merits the quotation of the following lengthy passage in full:

"But if a surplus labouring population is a necessary product of accumulation, or of the development of wealth on a capitalist basis, this surplus population becomes conversely the lever of capitalistic accumulation, nay a condition of existence of the capitalist mode of production. It forms a disposable industrial reserve army that belongs to capital quite as absolutely as if the latter had bred it at its own cost. Independently of the limits of the actual increase of production, it creates for the changing needs of the self-expansion of capital, a mass of human materials always ready for exploitation. With accumulation, and the development of the productiveness of labour that accompanies it, the power of sudden expansion of capital grows also; it grows not merely because the elasticity of the capital already functioning increases, not merely because the absolute wealth of society expands, of which capital forms an elastic part, not merely because credit, under every special stimulus, at once places an unusual part of this wealth at the disposal of production in the form of additional capital; it grows also because the technical conditions of the process of production themselves - machinery, means of transport, etc. - now admit of the rapidest transformation of masses of surplus product into additional means of production. The mass of social wealth, overflowing with the advance of accumulation and transformable into additional capital, thrusts itself frantically into old branches of production, whose market suddenly expands, or into newly formed branches such as railways, etc. the need for which grows out of the development of the old ones! In all such cases there must be the possibility of throwing great masses of men suddenly on the decisive points without injury to the scale of production in other spheres. Overpopulation supplies these masses ... This increase is effected by the same process that constantly 'sets free' a part of the labourers; by methods which lessen the number of labourers employed in proportion to the increased population. The whole form of the movement of modern industry depends, therefore, upon the constant transformation of a part of the labouring population into unemployed or half-employed hands."⁶⁰

For Marx the existence of the industrial reserve army is evidence of one of the most important relations of dependence that develops

⁶⁰ K. Marx, Capital, Vol. 1, Op. Cit., pp. 632-633. I am indebted to H. Braverman's Labour and Monopoly Capital, Op. Cit., pp. 382-383 for recalling this important passage to my attention.

between the capitalist class and the working class. It also represents the affirmation of the proposition he put forward in the 1844-52 period that full determinant ownership allows for control over other people's labour.

According to Marx, the presence of this "relative surplus population" is both technically and functionally necessary for the normal operations of the C.M.P.. It serves the important function required by advanced capital accumulation of providing a labour supply that can be utilized to enhance capital mobility so that great masses of people can be thrown in and out of areas where capital ebbs and flows during the processes of investment, reinvestment or withdrawal. This process is made possible according to Marx not through the Malthusian theory of population, but by "a law of population peculiar to the capitalist mode of production". The workings of this law (always within the context of the class struggle itself) are to a large extent the result of the increase in the organic composition of capital where workers are "set free" or displaced by the increased mechanization of industry and can thus be transferred back and forth between capital and labour intensive industries as is required.⁶¹

Thus the size and structure of the reserve army of labour is adjusted to the rhythm of the "decennial cycles" of capital accumulation. In periods of rapid expansion the reserve army can be absorbed, while during the periods of contraction when the effects of overproduction make themselves felt, large sections of the working class can be released to recreate and maintain the necessary labour reservoir for the next cyclical upturn.⁶² The reserve army is also important for displacing the effects of competition out of the capitalist class and into the working class..

⁶¹Ibid., pp.632-637.

⁶²Ibid., pp.637-640; and K.Marx, Capital, Volume 2,Op.Cit., p.316.

A readily available labour supply allows equal exploitation of labour power by the individual capitalists, thus preventing arbitrary wage increases. And at the same time the presence of the reserve army of labour can result in the fragmentation of working class solidarity by setting employed and unemployed against each other. Thus, the presence of the industrial reserve army is responsible for keeping wages depressed during the cyclical upturn and advance of capital accumulation so that "the rise of wages therefore is confined within limits that not only leave intact the foundations of the capitalist system, but also secure its reproduction on a progressive scale."⁶³

In his discussions of the industrial reserve army, Marx noted that the agents of the working class were distributed amongst several specific structures of positions which combined to make up the "relative surplus population". The first of these is what Marx called the "floating surplus population". This refers to those labourers who move back and forth between "the centres of modern industry - factories, manufacturers, iron works, mines, etc.". It is they who are constantly "set free" through the innovation of machinery and other labour saving techniques, to be reabsorbed in part or in whole during the periods of rapid capital accumulation.⁶⁴ The second structure of positions occupied by the industrial reserve army arises as a result of the increased commercialization of agriculture. This is what Marx calls the "latent form" and it refers mainly to those agricultural day labourers who are "set free" from agricultural production and who are constantly flowing into the urban industrial areas where they may be absorbed into the "manufacturing proletariat".⁶⁵ The third

⁶³ K. Marx, Capital, Volume 1, Op.Cit., p.620.

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp.640-642.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p.642.

category of the industrial reserve army is the stagnant form. Marx points out that this group is largely to be found in "those decaying branches of industry where handicraft is yeilding to manufacture, manufacture to machinery". This stagnant form may be absorbed by the various new branches of industry or its members may slip into "the lowest sediment of the relative surplus population ... the sphere of pauperism".⁶⁶

The creation and transformation of the structure of the positions occupied by the members of the industrial reserve army, the capitalist class, the working class, and the other classes associated with previous modes of production, is largely what one might call the infrastructuralisation of class formation at the economic level. Marx's analysis suggests that this infrastructuralisation process is largely the result of the manner in which capital accumulation, centralization and concentration transform the structure of positions within and outside of the immediate production system resulting in the various patterns of the distribution of both the agents and means of production.

However, this process considered by itself does not give us social classes engaged in struggle. As one author has expressed it in a somewhat different context,

"This is a theory of 'empty places' - places defined within the organization of production in a social formation dominated by large capitalist production. At this level classes appear only as categories of persons occupying similar positions vis-a-vis the means and process of production. Concrete persons appear only as 'personifications' of such categories as 'carriers' or 'supporters' of the places. This is the level of 'class-in-itself' / class identified in terms of objective characteristics. At this level the occupants of places are

⁶⁶ Ibid., p.643. The structure of positions occupied by the reserve army of labour is somewhat different than those occupied by unemployed capitalists. As Marx carefully noted, "they stand at opposite poles - unemployed capital at one pole and unemployed worker population at the other." (Capital, Vol.3, Op.Cit., p.251.)

the 'sacks of potatoes'; they share the same relations to the means of production and hence the same objective interests,⁶⁷ yet they remain simply as categories, not as political forces."

In order to see to what extent Marx concurred with this proposition we must continue our interpretation by focusing on what Marx referred to as "functionally determined economic classes of society",⁶⁸ or as we have termed it, the functional determination of class formation at the economic level. For Marx the functional determination of class formation at the economic level (as it pertains to the C.M.P.) concerns the manner in which a variety of functions arise and become attached to the various structures of positions within the capitalist production process. The distribution of the "agents" of production amongst these structures of positions results in their becoming the "bearers" of the social relations that arise from these positions, and as well makes them become the performers of the various functions attached to these positions. For Marx the two most important aspects of the functional determination of class formation at the economic level concern the role and nature of the performance of the function of the "collective labourer" and the role and nature of the performance of the function of capital or the "collective capitalist". As we shall see the performance of these functions is determined by the specific nature of the C.M.P. and the class struggle.

Marx suggested that one of the important features of the C.M.P. that distinguishes it from other modes of production is the

⁶⁷ Adam Przeworski, "The Process of Class Formation: From Karl Kautsky's Class Struggle to Recent Controversies", unpublished paper, (University of Chicago, 1976), p.3. I am indebted to Professor Przeworski's paper for a number of points that I have utilized in assisting in the interpretation of Marx's theory of social classes.

⁶⁸ K.Marx, Capital, Vol.2, Op.Cit., p.359.

increasingly extended scale of the production process that is carried on. The increase in capital accumulation, centralization and concentration not only extends or generalizes commodity production, and therefore the market as well, but it also extends and thereby alters the very structure of the capitalist firm and the production process that characterizes the activity of the firm or enterprise. The production process, as the combined unity of the use value and surplus value producing processes, becomes increasingly socialized; it increasingly requires the co-operation of more and more labourers in order to produce more commodities for the extended market. The workshop of the mediaeval master handicraftsman no longer suffices for the extended operations of capitalist production. Larger workshops or factories are required, employing more labourers and more means of production.

According to Marx this results in a number of significant changes in both the development of capitalism and in the relations that obtain between social classes. One of the most significant changes is depicted by Marx in the following terms:

"All combined labour on a large scale requires more or less a directing authority in order to secure the harmonious working of the individual activities, and to perform the general functions that have their origin in the action of the combined organism as distinguished from the action of its separate organs. A single violin player is his own conductor; an orchestra requires a separate one. The work of directing, superintending, and adjusting becomes one of the functions of capital, from the moment that the labour under the control of capital becomes co-operative. Once a function of capital, it acquires special characteristics."⁶⁹

Marx has here located one of the most important functions that develops with the evolution of the C.M.P.. This function is that of "directing, superintending and adjusting" the activities that

⁶⁹ K. Marx, Capital, Volume 1, Op.Cit., pp.330-331.

are connected with the production of commodities. It is important to bear in mind that Marx did not conceive of this function arising "naturally" as a result of the emergence of "industrial society," and we will return to this important point shortly. However, for the moment, we are concerned with the "special characteristics" that these "functions of capital" take on.

The first of these special characteristics, also associated with the concentration, centralization and accumulation of capital and the extension or generalization of commodity production, arises when the individual capitalist is no longer able to perform "the functions of capital" by himself and therefore turns them over to "a special kind of wage labourer".

"The capitalist ... hands over the work of direct and constant supervision of the individual workmen and groups of workmen to a special kind of wage labourer. An industrial army of workmen, under the command of a capitalist requires, like a real army, officers (managers) and sergeants (foremen, overlookers) who while the work is being done command in the name of the capitalist. The work of supervision becomes their established and exclusive function."⁷⁰

Thus individual capitalist enterprises are characterized by a structure of positions, attached to which are the "functions of capital", namely "directing, superintending and adjusting", or as Marx also referred to them, a structure of positions attached to which are the functions of "management and supervision".⁷¹ These structures of positions become more and more essential to the capitalist firm, and within them there becomes concentrated the "work of control"⁷² over labour.

However, Marx draws an important distinction between two aspects of this "work of control", a distinction that is derived from the fact that the capitalist production process may be represented as both use value and a surplus value producing process.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p.332.

⁷¹ K.Marx, Capital, Volume 3, Op.Cit., pp.383,386.

⁷² K.Marx, Capital, Volume I, Op.Cit., p.332.

"The labour of supervision and management is naturally required wherever the direct process of production assumes the form of a combined social process and not of the isolated labour of independent producers. However, it has a double nature. On the one hand, all labour in which many individuals co-operate necessarily requires a commanding will to co-ordinate and unify the process and functions which apply not to partial operations but to the total activity of the workshop, much as that of an orchestra conductor. This is a productive job, which must be performed in every combined mode of production. On the other hand, ... this supervision work necessarily arises in all modes of production based on the antithesis between the labour, of the direct producer, and the owner of the means of production. The greater this antagonism, the greater the role played by supervision. Hence it reaches its peak in the slave system. But it is indispensable also in the capitalist mode of production, since the production process in it is simultaneously a process by which the capitalist consumes labour power."⁷³

What Marx is suggesting here is that "the labour of supervision and management" or "the work of control" is different as it pertains to the use value producing process than it is as it pertains to the surplus value producing process.⁷⁴ In the use value producing process, in order to unite the labourer and the means of production, "every combined mode of production" requires a certain degree of co-ordination and supervision. The "work of control" is here an essential function that arises when production takes place over an extended scale. However, the capitalist mode of production is also a surplus value producing process where, as Marx points out,

"The directing motive, the end and aim of capitalist production, is to extract the greatest possible amount of surplus value, and consequently to exploit labour power to the greatest possible extent. As the number of the co-operating labourers increases, so too does their resistance to the domination of capital, and with it, the necessity for capital to overcome the resistance by counter pressure. The control exercised by the capitalist is not only a special function, due to the nature of the social

⁷³ K.Marx, Capital, Volume 3, Op.Cit., pp.383-384.

⁷⁴ For a further confirmation of this point, see K.Marx, Capital, Volume 1, Op.Cit., pp.331-332.

labour process and peculiar to that process, but it is at the same time, a function of the exploitation of a social labour process, and is consequently rooted in the unavoidable antagonism between the exploiter and the living and the labouring raw material he exploits."⁷⁵

Marx again makes this distinction between the dual nature of the "work of control" in criticizing a political economist who failed to draw this distinction:

"But, when considering the capitalist mode of production, he, on the contrary [ie., mistakenly], treats the work of control made necessary by the co-operative character of the labour process as identical with the different work of control necessitated by the capitalist character of that process and the antagonism of interests between capitalist and labourer".⁷⁶

This distinction that Marx made concerning the dual nature of the "work of control" or of the "labour of management and supervision" has several important implications for his theory of social classes. The first of these concerns the relationship between this "function of capital" and the class struggle. In each of the passages quoted above, Marx has emphasized that the "work of control," as it pertains to the surplus value producing process, emerges out of the "antagonism" between capital and labour, or it arises as a result of worker "resistance" and thus as a form of capital's "counter pressure". Thus, in order to clarify this dual nature of "the work of control", we must turn to Marx's conception of the collective worker in order to see how this "function of capital" emerges out of the class struggle and results in furthering the process of the separation of execution from conception.

In his discussion of the transition from the early stages of manufacturing to what he called "modern industry" Marx drew an important distinction between the "formal" subordination of the labour process to the surplus value producing process and the "real" subordination of the labour process to the surplus value

⁷⁵ Ibid., p.331.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p.332.

producing process.⁷⁷ This important distinction that Marx drew has been summarized by Harry Braverman in the following terms:

"In the first stage of capitalism [the stage of formal subordination] the traditional work of the craftsman is subdivided into its constituent tasks and performed in series by a chain of detail workers so that the process is little changed; what has changed is the organization of labour. But in the next stage machinofacture [real subordination] the instrument of labour is removed from the workers hand and placed in the grip of a mechanism and the forces of nature are enlisted to supply power which, transmitted to the tool, acts upon the materials to yield the desired result; thus the change in the mode of production in this case comes from a change in the instruments of labour."⁷⁸

This transition from formal to real subordination, from a change in the organization of labour to a change in the instruments of labour, was for Marx not only an important aspect of the history of the development of the C.M.P., but also and more importantly, it represented the history of the constant struggle between capital and labour. Although Marx's Capital is and should be regarded as an important theoretical articulation of the nature of the C.M.P., it is at the same time a social history of the industrial revolution, the history of working men and women engaged in a constant struggle against the manner in which "social progress" was imposed upon them.

One of the most important struggles that Marx discussed that bears directly on the "work of control" concerns the inability of capital in its early stages to control the labour process:

"Although manufacturing creates ... a simple separation of the labourers into skilled and unskilled simultaneously with their hierarchic arrangement in classes, yet the number of the unskilled labourers, owing to the preponderating influence of the skilled, remains very limited ... Although the splitting up of handicrafts lowers the cost of forming the workman, and thereby lowers his value, yet for the more difficult detail

⁷⁷ K.Marx, Capital, Volume 1, Op.Cit., p.367.

⁷⁸ Ibid., pp.484-487.

work, a longer apprenticeship is necessary and, even where it would be superfluous, is jealously insisted upon by the workmen ... Since handicraft skill is the foundation of manufacture and since the mechanism of manufacture as a whole possesses no framework, apart from the labourers, capital is constantly compelled to wrestle with the insubordination of the workman ... Hence, throughout the whole manufacturing period there runs the complaint of want of discipline among the workmen... [Thus] capital failed to become the master of the whole disposable working time of the manufacturing labourers."⁷⁹

Without control of the "whole disposable working time", capital does not have the control to ensure that commodities are produced in conformance with the amount of socially necessary labour time required for their production. As long as the labourers possessed the "secrets", the "skill" and the knowledge of the labour process, capital's control over "discipline", "regularity", the ability to innovate, and the ability to have control over "the few main fundamental motions... of the human body" is incomplete.⁸⁰

Without this control capital cannot regulate the extent to which necessary labour time can be decreased so as to cheapen commodities and devalue labour power thus affording the possibility to realize greater surplus value. The apprenticeship system of the various crafts concentrated in manufacturing represent to the capitalist not special and unique skills, but rather time and cost consuming expenditures. Thus it becomes increasingly necessary for capital to separate the "secrets", the "skill", and the knowledge of the labourers so that "the accumulation of knowledge and of skill, of the general productive forces of the social brain, is thus absorbed into capital, as opposed to labour, and hence appears as an attribute of capital..."⁸¹

For Marx, it is because of "the supremacy of capital over labour" that this struggle for control of the labour process, arising as

⁷⁹ K. Marx, Capital, Volume 1, Op.Cit., p.367.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p.484-487.

⁸¹ K. Marx, Grundrisse, Op.Cit., p.694.

it does out of "class contradictions", results in capital's ability to absorb the knowledge of the labour process and to concentrate it in a structure of positions whose occupants perform "the functions of capital".⁸² Thus, "capital in its true development combines mass labour with skill, but in such a way that the former loses its physical power, and the skill resides not in the worker but in the machines and in the scientific combination of both as a whole in the factory."⁸³ It is this process that Marx refers to as the "real" subordination of the use value process to the surplus value creating process. And it is this process that represents the separating of conception from execution and the alienation and degradation of the working class.

In the following passages Marx summarizes these developments and in doing so he indicates the relationship that comes to exist between the collective labourer and capital, or those who perform the function of the collective labourer, and those who perform the function of capital.

"So far as the labour process is purely individual, one and the same labourer unites in himself all the functions that later on become separated. When an individual appropriates natural objects for his livelihood, no one controls him but himself. Afterwards he is controlled by others. A single man cannot operate upon nature without calling his own muscles into play under the control of his own brain. As in the natural body, head and hand wait upon each other, so that the labour process unites the labour of the hand with that of the head. Later on they part company and even become deadly foes. The product ceases to be the direct product of the individual and becomes a social product, produced in common by a collective labourer, i.e., by a combination of workmen, each of whom takes only a part greater or less in the manipulation of the subject of their labour. As the co-operative character of the labour process becomes more and more marked, so, as a necessary consequence, does our notion of productive labour, and of its agent the productive labourer become extended. In order to labour productively, it is no longer necessary for you to do

⁸² K. Marx, Capital, Volume 3, Op.Cit., p.386.

⁸³ K. Marx, Grundrisse, Op.Cit., p.529.

manual work yourself; enough if you are an organ of the collective labourer and perform one of its subordinate functions."84

"In the production process of capital ... labour is a totality - a combination of labourers - whose individual component parts are alien to one another, so that the overall process as a totality is not the work of the individual worker, and is furthermore the work of the different workers together only to the extent that they are [forcibly] combined, and do not [voluntarily] enter into combination with one another. The combination of this labour appears just as subservient to, and led by, an alien will and an alien intelligence having its animating unity elsewhere - as its material unity appears subordinate to the objective unity of the machinery of fixed capital which ... objectifies the scientific idea ... Hence, just as the worker relates to the product of his labour as an alien thing, so does he relate to the combination of labour as an alien combination, as well as his own labour as an expression of his life, which although it belongs to him, is alien to him and coerced from him."85

In these two passages Marx emphasizes how the increasingly social nature of the labour process has in effect replaced the individual labourer in whom all the functions of the labour process were concentrated, by the collective labourer whose separate organs perform a variety of subordinate functions. In the early phases of manufacturing, Marx depicted the collective labourer as a combination of detail labourers each performing a task related to the overall production of a specific commodity. In the age of machinofacture the collective labourer becomes a combination of separate labourers and various machines.

However, the specific combination of the collective labourer has its "animating unity elsewhere". This "animating unity" has become the function of capital and those who perform "the functions of capital", "the labour of management and supervision", "the work of control". Managers (performing "the labour of management"),

⁸⁴ K. Marx, Capital, Volume 1, Op.Cit., pp. 508-509.

⁸⁵ K. Marx, Grundrisse, Op.Cit., p. 470.

foremen and overlookers (performing "the labour of supervision"); engineers and scientists (responsible for the machinery which "objectifies the scientific idea"), all perform these "functions of capital" as a result of their occupying the structures of positions attached to which are the functions involving the "work of control". For Marx, it would appear that the capitalist himself, as owner of the means of production (single or "collective capitalist" in joint stock companies) performs the primary function of appropriating surplus value. Those who perform the secondary functions of capital through the "work of control" ensure the conditions for its maximum realization and appropriation. They become the "deadly foes" of the collective labourer who, having no decision making powers, and having been separated from the knowledge required to regulate the production system, is thereby reduced to performing the function of producing use values so as to create surplus value.⁸⁶

Thus, for Marx, the functional determination of class formation at the economic level (or as Marx himself termed the result of this process, "functionally determined economic classes of society") results in the emergence of a series of structures of positions within the production process, attached to which are specific functions that arise historically from the very contradictions of the C.M.P. itself; functions that are exercised by the agents who occupy these positions. These structures are constantly changing over time (at both the macro (economy) and the micro (firm) level) as a result of the previously discussed infrastructuralization process. However, Marx's analysis seems to suggest that the creation of these structures of positions, the functions attached to them, and thus the infrastructuralization process itself, must be viewed within the context of the manner in which capital continuously rationalizes the costs of production. And the rationalization process itself (especially the separation of execution and

⁸⁶In the second passage (quote 85) Marx reintroduces the four categories of alienation developed in the 1844-52 period, namely the

conception and the increase in the "work of control") must in the final analysis be understood in terms of the struggle between capital and labour arising out of the "class contradictions" associated with the C.M.P. itself.

For Marx, it was the class struggle between capital and labour that resulted in the eventual fixation of the limits of the normal working day. For the capitalist class, this resulted in the necessity of switching from the production of absolute surplus value to the production of relative surplus value. This in turn necessitated the need for greater control over labour to facilitate a constant increase in the organic composition of capital, which was largely accomplished by increasing "the work of control", furthering the separation of conception from execution, and ensuring the perpetuation of the reserve army of labour.

However, Marx suggests that as the concentration centralization and accumulation of capital continues on an ever extending scale, the capitalist class is continuously confronted with barriers that emerge from both the contradictions of the capitalist system itself (overproduction, etc.) and those that emerge from the contradictions between social classes (workers' resistance, trade union action, etc.). "Capitalist production seeks continually to overcome these important barriers, but overcomes them only by means which again place these barriers in its way and on a more formidable scale."⁸⁷ It becomes increasingly necessary for capital to confront these barriers, not only with its economic power, but also with political and ideological control. Thus, the political and the ideological increasingly enter into the process of class formation, and into the process of class struggle. However, before turning to the political and ideological factors, we must briefly consider several problems that arise from Marx's analysis.

alienation of the worker from his work, the product of his work, his fellow man, and his species being.

⁸⁷ K.Marx, Capital, Vol.3, Op.Cit., p.250.

Marx's formulation of the manner in which specific functions arise and become attached to the structures of positions within the capitalist production process represents an important attempt to come to grips with the process of class formation at the economic level. His articulation of the performance of the functions (general and subordinate) of the collective labourer and the performance of the (primary and secondary) functions of capital, provides a useful theoretical schema that with further development may be of great benefit for developing a theoretical model of class relations that can be utilized for empirical research.

However, a problem appears to exist in terms of the relationship between the agents who perform the various functions and their respective class membership. Given Marx's general adaptation of a three class model of society (landlords, capitalists and wage labourers),⁸⁸ one seriously wonders whether the functional criteria provided by Marx is adequate for specifying (at the economic level) the respective class membership of the various agents of production. Are all persons who perform the function of the collective labourer to be considered members of the working class? Are all those who perform the functions of capital to be considered members of the capitalist class (including scientists, foremen, overlookers, engineers, etc.)? If this were the case we would simply have a repetition of the two class model that tended at times to emerge in Marx's work during the 1844-52 period. However, despite the continuing conceptual ambiguity that surrounded Marx's usage of class in both the 1844-52 and the 1852-75 period, there is evidence that suggests that this is not the case. This evidence is connected with Marx's conception of productive and unproductive labour, his thesis concerning the emergence of the middle class,

⁸⁸ K. Marx, Capital, Volume 3, Op.Cit., p.885.

and his previously mentioned articulation of the dual nature of the "work of control".

Marx's thesis concerning the nature of productive and unproductive labour is a direct corollary of his theory pertaining to the nature of surplus value.* The first and perhaps most familiar definition that Marx provided for the concept of productive labour was that it constituted "labour which produces a surplus value, a new value over and above the equivalent which it receives as wages".⁸⁹ Productive labour then is exchanged against capital, perpetuates its self-expansion, and is therefore responsible for generating the social surplus of a society. Unproductive labour, on the other hand, does not produce surplus value and is exchanged against revenue as opposed to capital:

"In bourgeois society itself, all exchange of personal services for revenue - including labour - for personal consumption, cooking, sewing, etc., garden work, etc., up to and including all of the unproductive classes, civil servants, physicians, lawyers, scholars, etc. belongs under this subset, within this category [of unproductive labour]".⁹⁰

In terms of developing a theory of class formation, the concepts of productive and unproductive labour were useful for Marx in that they enabled him to see that as the social surplus of a society grew, as it did under capitalism, then fewer productive labourers (in relative terms) would be employed for the production of the material means of subsistence, and thus more people would be

* As Harry Braverman has pointed out, "... the discussion of productive and unproductive labour, as it was carried out by Marx, implied no judgement about the nature of the work processes under discussion or their usefulness to humans in particular, or society at large, but was concerned specifically and entirely with the role of labour in the capitalist mode of production. Thus the discussion is in reality an analysis of the relations of production and, ultimately, of the class structure of society, rather than of the utility of particular varieties of labour". (H. Braverman, Labour and Monopoly Capital, Op.Cit., p.411.)

⁸⁹ K. Marx, Theories of Surplus Value, Op.Cit., p.202.

⁹⁰ K. Marx, Grundrisse, Op.Cit., p.468.

employed outside of the traditional branches of productive labour. The question then arises concerning the class membership of these mainly unproductive labourers who occupied the continually growing structure of positions outside the traditional manual occupations of the working class. It was in response to this question that Marx put forward his thesis of the emergence and expansion of the middle class:

"What Ricardo forgets to emphasize is the constantly growing number of the middle class, those who stand between the workman on the one hand and the capitalists and the landlord on the other. The middle classes maintain themselves to an ever increasing extent directly out of revenue, they are a burden weighing heavily on the working base and increase the social security and power of the upper ten thousand."⁹¹

"Malthus 'the profound thinker' has different views. His profound hope, which he himself describes as more or less utopian is that the mass of the middle class should grow and that the proletariat (those who work) should constitute a constantly declining proportion (even though it increases absolutely) of the total population. This in fact is the course taken by bourgeois society."⁹²

Now if we take this middle class into consideration and disregard the conceptual ambiguity that surrounds Marx's usage of the concept class, we can perhaps make alternative hypotheses concerning Marx's conception of class boundaries. In the 1852-75 period, Marx provided essentially three criteria for the designation of class boundaries at the economic level:

- 1) ownership and non-ownership of the means of production
- 2) the hierarchy of authority relations amongst those who perform

⁹¹ K. Marx, Theories of Surplus Value, Volume 2, Op.Cit., p.573.

⁹² K. Marx, Theories of Surplus Value, Volume 3, Op.Cit., p.63. Again the conceptual ambiguity of Marx's usage of class renders this conception problematic as Marx appears to use middle class, and middle or intermediate strata interchangeably. See K. Marx, Capital, Volume 3, Op.Cit., p.885; and K. Marx, Theories of Surplus Value, Volume 2, Op.Cit., p.561.

the work of control.⁹³

3) productive and unproductive labour.

This criteria implies that the working class that Marx was dealing with would include all productive labourers separated from their means of production and removed from the hierarchy of the relations of authority or the "work of control" and made subordinate to it. The middle class by the same criteria would include all unproductive labourers (intellectuals, government civil servants, etc.) and all those below the level of manager in terms of the hierarchy of authority relations (foremen, overlookers, clerks, etc.). The capitalist class would then include the owners of the means of production, and presumably the managers of joint stock

⁹³ The hierarchy of authority relations as a criteria for class boundaries tends to be somewhat obscure in Marx's work, but remains if not explicit, at least implicit in most of his discussions of management and supervision: See in particular, K. Marx, Capital, Volume 3, Op.Cit., p.881, and K. Marx, Ibid., pp.383-340. However, one must remember that Marx, writing prior to what has been called the "managerial revolution", was dealing with a much different phenomenon than we are confronted with today. The mid 19th century factory system was characterized by a hierarchy of personal command rather than a bureaucratic structure regulated by set rules and procedures. As one author put it,

"The foreman in the 19th century factory often had much greater personal discretion and power than today. In the 19th century, authority within the capitalist factory was typically organized in much the same manner as an army. There was a simple chain of command and the authority at each level was absolute with respect to the level below. Such a system Marx aptly termed 'factory depotism' and foremen in such a factory had at least the potential of being petty despots. As the capitalist enterprise grew in scale and complexity, the authority structure gradually became more bureaucratized. As Weber would put it, foremen increasingly became the administrators of impersonal rules rather than the dispensers of personal fiat." (F.O.Wright, "Class Boundaries in Advanced Capitalist Societies," New Left Review, #98, July - August, 1976), pp.33-34.

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companies as well as the board of directors.

Although this first approximation is useful for suggesting what Marx's criteria involves in terms of designating class boundaries, it is incomplete and somewhat misleading for the following reasons: 1) It does not take into account a second definition of productive and unproductive labour that Marx provided; 2) It tends to treat class boundaries as a form of intellectual exercise in abstraction instead of defining class within the context of the class struggle. It is therefore somewhat static and tends to see class boundaries and hence social classes, as fixed and immutable, thus failing to take into account Marx's concept of proletarianization.

Therefore, in order to amend the criteria designating class boundaries we must take these two criteria into account. The second definition that Marx provided for the nature of productive and unproductive labour was given within the context of his discussion of the concept of the collective labourer.

*We are utilizing this criteria only in conjunction with the developmental tendencies of the C.M.P. that Marx was faced with and only in terms of the industrial, commercial and financial sectors, as opposed to and therefore excluding the agricultural sector. On the basis of this criteria, the petty bourgeoisie, falling outside the capital-labour polarity, and including all self-employed farmers, shopkeepers and tradesmen, etc., would constitute a separate class. The criteria of class boundaries we have derived from Marx also includes of course the notion of exploitation. However, this does not mean that only productive workers are exploited. For an example of Marx's conception of the exploitation of unproductive labour, see K.Marx, Capital, Volume 3, Op.Cit., pp.292-294.

"As the co-operative character of the labour process becomes more and more marked, so as a necessary consequence, does our notion of productive labour, and of its agent, the productive labourer, become extended. In order to labour productively, it is no longer necessary for you to do manual work yourself; enough if you are an organ of the collective labourer, and therefore perform one of its subordinate functions. The first definition given ... of productive labour, a definition deduced from the very nature of the production of material objects, still remains correct for the collective labourer considered as a whole. But it no longer holds good for each member taken individually."⁹⁴

What this definition suggests is that certain forms of labour that might otherwise be considered as unproductive, become with the development of the C.M.P., "technically indispensable" for the production of use values and hence for the creation of surplus value and must therefore be designated as productive labour. This is why Marx pointed out earlier in his discussion of the dual nature of the work of control that: "All labour in which many individuals co-operate necessarily requires a commanding will to co-ordinate and unify the process, and functions which apply not to partial operations but to the total activity of the workshop.... This is a productive job which must be performed in every combined mode of production."⁹⁵

However, if this distinction is drawn then the concept of productive labour as one of the boundaries of the working class becomes problematic. Those agents who occupy a structure of

⁹⁴ K.Marx, Capital, Vol.1, Op.Cit., pp.508-509. Perhaps the closest approximation to the meaning of this second definition of productive and unproductive labour has been given by E.Mandel in the following terms: "In general, one can say that all labour which creates, modifies or conserves use values or which is technically indispensable for realizing them is productive labour, that is, it increases their exchange value." (E.Mandel, Marxist Economic Theory, Op.Cit., p.91). Although this definition is useful, it depends on what is and what is not technically indispensable. Therefore, what is required (if in fact this is possible) is a theoretical elaboration of the criteria that distinguish what is and what is not technically necessary.

⁹⁵ K.Marx, Capital, Vol.3, Op.Cit., p.383. For an interesting and

positions attached to which is the function of the "work of control" become by definition (owing to the dual nature of the work of control) members of more than one class (i.e., both working class and middle class). That is to say, they perform both the function of capital and the function of the collective labourer simultaneously. It would then require distinctions such as status and level of income to separate the two classes, and Marx tended to view such criteria at best as being secondary or derivative factors whose usage is confined to divisions within classes.

The only solution to this problem appears to arise from Marx's principle of proletarianization. Although the following passage demonstrates this principle in relation to commercial office work, it would appear to apply to the "work of control" as well.

"The commercial worker, in the strict sense of the term, belongs to the better paid class of wage-workers - to those whose labour is classed as skilled and stands above average labour. Yet the wage tends to fall, even in relation to average labour, with the advance of the capitalist mode of production. This is due partly to the division of labour in the office, implying a one-sided development of the labour capacity, the cost of which does not fall entirely on the capitalist since the labourer's skill develops by itself through the exercise of his function, and all the more rapidly as division of labour makes it one-sided. Secondly, because the necessary training, knowledge of commercial practices, languages, etc., is more and more rapidly, easily, universally and cheaply reproduced with the progress of science and public education, the more the capitalist mode of production directs teaching methods, etc. towards practical purposes. The universality of public education enables capitalists to recruit such labourers from classes that formerly had no access to such trades and were accustomed to a lower standard of living. Moreover, this increases supply and hence competition."⁹⁶

This conception of proletarianization through the increase in

informative critique of the interpretation we have utilized here concerning Marx's concept of the collective labourer and the dual nature of the "work of control", see N. Poulantzas, Classes in Contemporary Capitalism, (London: New Left Books, 1975), pp. 224-250, especially pp. 230-234.

⁹⁶ K. Marx, Capital, Vol. 3, Op. Cit., p. 300.

the technical division of labour and the corresponding tendential devaluation of labour power through the generalization and simplification of marketable skills, was used by Marx to demonstrate the constant fluctuation and alterations occurring within the class structure of capitalist social formations. Although Marx only hinted at how this conception would apply to the dual nature of the work of control, the theoretical framework that he developed would seem to permit such an extension and application of the concept of proletarianization to those agents of the middle class who through the second definition of productive labour perform both the function of the collective labourer and the function of capital.

Such an extension could be utilized, for example, to show how many of the "agents" of the middle class occupy "contradictory class locations", the class character of which tends to change over time. An extension of the technical division of labour, which alters the structure of positions within the hierarchically ordered authority or control structure, accompanied by a relative decline in value of labour power, could reflect a decrease in time spent performing the function of capital (what Marx called "despotic control") and a corresponding increase in the time spent performing the function of the collective labourer. This would suggest important theoretical and practical implications concerning the objective class interests of these personnel vis a vis their relation with the capitalist class and the working class. It would also suggest the importance of ideological and political criteria in terms of clarifying the definitions for class boundaries.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ The concept of contradictory class locations has been developed by E.O. Wright in his article "Class Boundaries in Advanced Capitalism", Op.Cit.. The essential hypothesis put forward by Wright suggests: "The extent to which political and ideological relations enter into the determination of class position is itself determined by the degree to which those positions occupy a contradictory location at the level of social relations of production. The more contradictory is a position within social relations of production the more political and ideological relations can influence its objective position within class relations. (Ibid., p.39) The thesis concerning the dual character

Whether or not Marx envisaged this particular application of his concept of proletarianization is not really of great importance. What is important is that this notion of proletarianization as well as the other criteria for determining class boundaries that are both implicit and explicit in Marx's work, suggest that social classes are not fixed and immutable groupings of men and women. As one author has put it, "Classes do not have some permanent reality. Rather, they are formed, they consolidate themselves and they disintegrate or disaggregate, and they are reformed. It is a process of constant movement, and the greatest barrier to understanding their action is reification."⁹⁸

Marx's conception of class as an historical relationship that can only be conceptualized in terms of social relational categories that are endowed with the capacity to explain the making and remaking of social structure rather than its completion, establishes this important point quite clearly. It also suggests, as another writer has pointed out, that: "Classes involve in one and the same process both class contradictions and class struggle. Social classes coincide with class practices, i.e., the class struggle, and are only defined in their mutual opposition".⁹⁹ Because classes, for Marx, must be defined within the context of the class struggle, and because class struggle is simultaneously political, economic and ideological, we must now turn our attention to the political and ideological determination of class formation and class struggle.

of "the work of control" has been developed by G.Carchedi, "On the Economic Identification of the New Middle Class", Op.Cit., Perhaps the best historical example of the proletarianization thesis pertains to the historical evolution of clerical labour, and is ably discussed and documented by M.Braverman in his book Labour and Monopoly Capital, Op.Cit., pp.293-356.

⁹⁸I.Wallerstein, "Class Formation in the Capitalist World Economy", Op.Cit., p.39.

⁹⁹E.O.Wright, "Class Boundaries in Advanced Capitalism", Op.Cit., p.4.

Class Formation, Class Struggle and the Ideological/Political Superstructure

In attempting to come to grips with the specific character of the capitalist mode of production, "to lay bare the economic law of motion of modern society", Marx repeatedly emphasized,

"Whatever the social form of production, labourers and means of production always remain factors of it. Put, in a state of separation from each other, either of these factors can be such only potentially. For production to go on they all must unite. The specific manner in which this union is accomplished distinguishes the different economic epochs of the structure of society from one another."¹⁰⁰

"The essential difference between the various economic forms of society, between, for instance, a society based on slave labour and one based on wage labour, lies only in the mode in which this surplus labour is in each case extracted from the actual producer, the labourer."¹⁰¹

In attempting to understand this union of the labourers and the means of production and thus the manner in which surplus labour is extracted from the direct producers, Marx maintained that the process had to be viewed as a totality. And the notion of totality itself had to be theoretically articulated in such a way that the different structures or levels of the totality comprising the economic, the political and the ideological were conceptualized in terms of their mutual interaction, their reciprocal determination, representing "the concentration of many determinations" which are hierarchically ordered in terms of their rank and influence upon each other. It was this conception of totality which Marx developed that enabled him to emphasize that the ideological and political superstructure is not simply a reflection of the economic base of society. Nor is it simply a relationship of mutual determination. As Marx expressed

¹⁰⁰ K. Marx, Capital, Volume 2, Op.Cit., p.34.

¹⁰¹ K. Marx, Capital, Volume 1, Op.Cit., p.217.

it metaphorically,

"In all forms of society there is one specific kind of production which predominates over the rest whose relations thus assign rank and influence to the others. It is a general illumination which bathes all the other colours and modifies their particularity. It is a particular ether which determines the specific gravity of every being which has materialized within it."¹⁰²

It is this theoretical conception of the primacy of the economic base that in turn gives rise to the "overdeterminant" character of the ideological and political superstructure; overdeterminant in the sense that the economic base "modifies" the relatively autonomous effect of the ideological and the political by structuring or setting limits within which the effects of the superstructure are made operative upon the economic structure. It was from this standpoint that Marx developed his conception of totality during the 1852-75 period, and it was from this conception of the relations between the economic structure and the superstructure that Marx developed his theory concerning the manner in which the ideological and the political enter into the process of class formation and class struggle.

In considering the "overdeterminant" impact of the superstructure on the process of class formation and class struggle, one would expect significant alterations and innovations in Marx's theory of the political and the ideological, given the substantial changes that his economic theory underwent during the 1852-75 period. In fact, the alterations, innovations and reorientation that took place, although indeed significant for the development of Marx's theory of social classes, can only in part be attributed to the internal

¹⁰² K. Marx, Grundrisse, Op.Cit., pp.106-107. For an interesting discussion of Marx's conception of totality as it pertains to the manner in which the various elements of the totality combine in different historically evolved modes of production, see L. Althusser and E. Balibar, Reading Capital, (London:1970).

development of his economic theory itself. These changes must also be attributed to the impact that the evolution of the capitalist system had upon Marx's work. In this respect, to utilize the terms of a contemporary historian, the changes in Marx's theory of social classes between the 1844-52 period and the 1852-75 period in many ways reflected the transition from "the Age of Revolution" to the "Age of Capital".¹⁰³ And we must consider several aspects of this transition if we are to understand the re-orientation of certain aspects of Marx's conception of the political and the ideological in relation to his theory of social classes.

The two countries whose social, political and economic histories were most influential in terms of the development of Marx's theory of social classes in both the 1844-52 and the 1852-75 periods were England and France. As Professor Hobsbawm has pointed out, each of these two nations spearheaded a form of revolution which remoulded the social structure of Europe as well as significantly altering that of the rest of the world.

"If the economy of the nineteenth century world was formed mainly under the influence of the British Industrial Revolution, its politics and ideology were formed mainly by the French. Britain provided the model for its railroads and factories, the economic explosives which cracked open the traditional economic and social structures ... but France made its revolutions and gave them their ideas, to the point where ... politics between 1789 and 1917 were largely the struggle for and against the principles of 1789, or the even more incendiary ones of 1793. France provided the vocabulary and the issues of liberal and radical-democratic politics for most of the world."¹⁰⁴

It was the impact of this dual revolution that provided Marx with the raw material out of which he forged his theory of economics,

¹⁰³ See: E.J.Hobsbawm, The Age of Revolution: Europe 1789-1848, (London: Sphere Books, 1973) and E.J.Hobsbawm, The Age of Capital: 1848-1875, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975).

¹⁰⁴ E.J.Hobsbawm, The Age of Revolution, Op.Cit. pp 73-74

politics, and ideology. It was also through the impact of the dual revolution that there emerged significant differences between the process of class formation and class struggle in the first and second half of the nineteenth century.

In the period from 1750-1850, the industrial revolution gave birth to the industrial working class. Undoubtedly this working class assumed different forms in different European nations depending upon the historical situation and institutional structure of the respective countries. However, the very manner in which the industrial working class came into existence posed a series of problems that exhibited a certain similarity in terms of the manner in which they confronted the dominant classes of Europe. For the dominant classes, above all else, the problem of order and stability was their chief concern. In a perceptive statement concerning this problem, Marx pointed out,

"It is furthermore clear that here as always it is in the interest of the ruling section of society to sanction the existing order as law and to legally establish its limits given through usage and tradition. Apart from all else, this, by the way, comes about of itself as soon as the constant reproduction of the basis of the existing order and its fundamental relations assumes a regulated and orderly form in the course of time. And such regulation and order are themselves indispensable elements of any mode of production if it is to assume social stability and independence from mere chance and arbitrariness."¹⁰⁵

The revolutions and social turmoil of the first one hundred years of the industrial revolution reflected the inability of the dominant classes to institutionalize a set of social norms and social values derived from common usage and tradition that would ensure social stability. Essentially, given the emergence of bourgeois society, this was impossible to do as the values and

¹⁰⁵ K. Marx, Capital, Volume 3, Op.Cit., p.793.

norms of the conflicting classes exhibited little or no basis of commonality. As the young Engels put it so well, "The workers speak other dialects, have other thoughts and ideals, other customs and moral principles, a different religion and other politics than those of the bourgeoisie. Thus they are two radically dissimilar nations, as unlike as difference of race could make them."¹⁰⁶

Thus it was not socially sanctioned norms and values that were in the process of assuming institutional form, but a new set of class norms and class values. And when a new set of class relations are in the process of assuming an institutional form, as was the case with the emergence of the bourgeois world during the first one hundred years of the industrial revolution, the traditional legitimating mechanisms of a society are rudely shaken and torn asunder. In the 1750-1850 period this was no more apparent than in the workshop, factory, mill and mine where "the legitimizing effects of the old paternalist moral economy" were destroyed and replaced by a market mechanism that by its very nature was unequipped to legitimate the newly emerging relationships of exploitation.

"The exploitive relationship is more than the sum of grievances and mutual antagonisms. It is a relationship which can be seen to take distinct forms in different historical contexts, forms which are related to corresponding forms of ownership and state power. The classic exploitive relationship of the industrial revolution is depersonalized in the sense that no lingering obligations of mutuality - or paternalism or deference or of the interests of "the Trade" - are admitted. There is no whisper of the "just" price or of a wage justified in relation to social or moral sanctions, as opposed to the operation of free market forces. Antagonism is accepted as intrinsic to the relations of production. Managerial or supervisory functions demand the repression of all attributes except those which further the expropriation of the maximum of surplus value from labour. This is the political economy

¹⁰⁶ F. Engels, The Condition of the Working Class in England, quoted in F. Parkin, Class Inequality and Political Order, (London: The Chaucer Press, 1971), p. 79.

which Marx anatomized in Das Kapital. The worker has become an 'instrument' or an entry among other items of cost."¹⁰⁷

The effects of these newly emergent relations of exploitation on the working class or "labouring poor" was a mixture of domination and mystification. There was domination because the relationships were of an oppressive nature and, lacking normal recourse to the traditional mechanisms of legitimation, they were maintained and enforced through massive personalized and depersonalized violence as well as ruthless discipline. There was mystification, because, unlike the "old agrarian cycle" that revealed the inner nature of its calamitous effects through comprehensible forms such as climatic disasters, the newly emergent market mechanism and its trade cycle did not so readily reveal the *raison d'être* of the crises that beset the hand loom weavers and others whose mode of existence was no longer deemed rational or necessary by market standards. With the severing of the traditional "social bonds" of community, family and occupation, and under conditions of mass poverty, deprivation, and degradation, rebellion and revolution were both natural and virtually inevitable.

Whether in the more localized form of spontaneous mobbing and rioting, or the more generalized form of the mass based revolutions occurring in 1789, 1820-22, 1830, and 1848; whether through the 'sectarian organization' of the "secret insurrectionary brotherhood" or the more broadly based chartist movement; whether through burning, looting, ransacking and the erecting of barricades, or the more peaceful form of mass demonstration, "never in European history, and rarely elsewhere, has revolution been so endemic, so general, so likely to spread by spontaneous contagion as well as by deliberate propaganda".¹⁰⁸ Given such an environment and the presence of this revolutionary fervor and activity, Marx's conception of the universal

¹⁰⁷ E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class, Op.Cit., p.222.

¹⁰⁸ L.J. Hobsbawm, The Age of Revolution, Op.Cit., p.138.

mission of the proletariat and the inevitable and immediate transcendence of capitalism were perhaps not without foundation, in his work during the 1844-1852 period.

However, the development of capitalism in the 1852-75 period assumed a somewhat different form which had important implications for the future of the working class. And once again France and England provided for Marx the implications of these new developments. Only this time, the sources of the dual revolution did not affirm the inevitability of the revolutionary transcendence of capitalism, but on the contrary, they suggested the contradictory paths that the working class might take with the future development of the C.M.P.. The defeat of chartism and the general passivity of the English working class revealed the possibility of reformism, while the emergence of the Paris Commune in France in 1871 not only confirmed the possibility of revolution but provided for Marx the first historical form that resembled the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Thus, the development of capitalism in the second half of the nineteenth century that precipitated these divergent paths taken by the English and the French working classes revealed the possibility of a general improvement in the material conditions of life which could be utilized by the dominant classes as a mode of integration, or by the working class as the basis for abolishing the old mode of production itself.

In speaking of the acceptance of the reform legislation of 1867 by the "rulers" of Britain, Professor Hobsbawm described the integration and deradicalization of the English working class in the following terms.

"They were prepared to accept it because they no longer regarded the British working class as revolutionary. At all events they now saw it as divided into a politically moderate aristocracy of labour, ready to adopt capitalism, and as politically ineffective, because unorganized and leaderless, proletarian plebs, which represented no major danger. For the great mass movements which mobilized all the labouring poor against the employing class, like chartism, were dead. Socialism had disappeared from the country of its birth.... Affluence - or what men used to starvation regarded as comfort - had extinguished the fires in hungry bellies. Equally important, the discovery that capitalism was not a temporary catastrophe, but a permanent system which allowed some improvement, had altered the objective of their struggles. There were no socialists to dream of a new society. There were trade unions seeking to exploit the laws of political economy in order to create a scarcity of their kind of labour and thus increase their members' wages."109

These developments and the more general implications of the economic boom between 1848 and 1870 were not unnoticed by Marx and Engels. In a letter to Marx in 1858, Engels' sarcastically lamented that:

"The English proletariat is becoming more and more bourgeois, so that this most bourgeois of all nations is apparently aiming ultimately at the possession of a bourgeois aristocracy and a bourgeois proletariat as well as a bourgeoisie. For a nation which exploits the whole world this of course is to a certain extent justifiable."110

And in reflecting on the industrial boom in the post-1848 period, Engels noted, "the masses will have become damned lethargic as a result of this prolonged prosperity".¹¹¹ In Capital Marx also took account of the improvements in the material conditions of various sections of the working class which tended to mask the relations of exploitation. For Marx, as the relations between capital and

¹⁰⁹ E.J. Hobsbawm, Industry and Empire, Op.Cit., p.126. For an outstanding analysis of the structure of the British working class and the structure of the labour movement and elite during the 1850-1890 period see Z. Bauman, Between Class and Flite, Op.Cit., pp.65-130.

¹¹⁰ F. Engels, letter to Marx, Oct., 1858, in R. Hyman, Marxism and the Sociology of Trade Unionism, Op.Cit., pp.9-10.

¹¹¹ F. Engels, letter to Marx, Nov. 5, 1857, quoted in E.J. Hobsbawm, The Age of Capital, Op.Cit., p.33.

labour assumed new forms of dependency of the latter upon the former; they appeared cloaked

"...in bearable, or, as Eden says, 'comfortable and liberal' forms ... from the workers own swelling surplus product, a part of which is constantly being converted into additional capital, a greater portion flows back to them in cash so that they can broaden the sphere of their consumption, equip themselves better with clothing and furniture, etc. and develop a small reserve of savings."¹¹²

However, this phenomenon of small improvements in the material conditions of the working class in the 1852-75 period was only one aspect of a series of structural changes that capitalist development precipitated. In terms of class formation, the passage from the age of textiles to the age of coal and iron, and the increasing emphasis upon the production of capital goods, promoted a rapid increase in the size of the industrial working class. The working class that developed during the 1852-75 period was now more clearly distinguishable from its pre-1848 form, where it tended to be immersed in that social grouping that has come to be known as the "labouring poor".

However, the working class of the 1852-75 period, especially in England, was also beginning to exhibit a new form of internal stratification. Besides the manual labourers employed in factories, mills and mines, a new stratum of skilled labourers was expanding (mechanics, engineers, etc.) as the organic composition of capital continued to rise. Whether this new stratum of skilled workers is considered as the aristocracy of the working class (as Marx called it), or part of the lower middle class, its members had a distinctly

¹¹² K. Marx, Capital, Volume 1, quoted in Martin Nicolaus, "Proletariat and Middle Class in Marx: Hegelian Choreography and the Capitalist Dialectic", Op.Cit., p.36.

different class situation that distinguished them from the larger stratum of the so-called unskilled labourers. The two strata exhibited differences in terms of level and regularity of wages, working conditions and social conditions outside the work place. There also existed differentials in terms of their respective prospects for social security and future advancement.¹¹³ These differences provided an objective basis for the development of status differentials. And, for those concerned, the notion and the possibility of attaining "respectability" was a reality that arose from their improved class situation. As Professor Bauman has pointed out in regard to the English working class, these differences were structurally incorporated into the organizations of the skilled labourers.

"The labour movement of the period [1850-1890] served to institutionalize the parochial interests of particular trades. At the same time it was the sum of two pressures towards social mobility: that of the stratum [of skilled workers] which was seeking to free itself from the amorphous mass of factory workers; and that of the elite of this stratum, seeking to clear a road along which its individual members could advance further up the social ladder. In practice, both pressures were an expression of the labour movement's increasing integration in middle class society, its structure and hierarchy of values, a process disclosed by the exceptional intensification of conformist trends."¹¹⁴

Although Marx, in his own work, did not elaborate on these important distinctions within the working class to any great extent (except of course for his important thesis of proletarianization), his activity in the First International in the 1860's and his dealings there with the leaders of the English working class, almost

¹¹³ These factors have been utilized by E.J. Hobsbawm as a set of criteria for determining the membership for the aristocracy of labour. For a discussion of these criteria, see Z. Bauman, Between Class and Elite, Op.Cit., pp.67-68.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p.104.

completely recruited from the stratum of skilled workers, made him painfully aware of the dimensions of the ideological conflict that perpetuated the divide between a strategy for reform and a strategy for revolution.* Essentially this question of reform or revolution reflected the fact that the change from the "Age of Revolution" to the "Age of Capital" had brought about a new dimension in class relations and thus a new dimension in the class struggle. As Engels perceptively noted,

"If the conditions have changed in the case of war between nations, this is no less true in the case of the class struggle ... For here too, the conditions of the struggle had essentially changed. Rebellion in the old style, street fighting with barricades, which decided the issue everywhere up to 1848, was to a considerable extent obsolete... The time of surprise attacks, of revolutions carried through by small conscious minorities of unconscious masses is past. Where it is a question of a complete transformation of the social organization, the masses themselves must also be in it, must themselves have already grasped what is at stake, what they are going in for body and soul ... But in order that the masses may understand what is to be done, long persistent work is required, and it is just this work that we are now pursuing."¹¹⁵

This change in the role and nature of the class struggle, which was initiated during the 1852-75 period, saw the barricades being exchanged for the ballot box as universal male suffrage was implemented or extended in several European nations. Trade unions were in many cases legalized or had their limited rights modestly extended. And perhaps most importantly, this was the era that ushered in the mass based socialist political party that would become the subject of the great debates between the next generation

* For a good discussion of this point and other aspects of Marx's work in the First International see D. Fernbach's introductory essay to K. Marx, The First International and After, (London: Vintage Books, 1974), pp.9-71.

¹¹⁵ F. Engels, in the introduction to K. Marx, The Class Struggles in France, 1848-1850, Op.Cit., pp.196,199.

of Marxist and non-Marxist theoreticians and practitioners (Kautsky, Lenin, Bernstein, Luxemburg, etc.). For Marx, the embryonic form of the mass based socialist party gave substance to the thesis he had only partially developed in the 1844-52 period. This thesis, which had important implications for his theory of class formation and class struggle in the 1852-75 period, concerned the organization of the working class into a class for itself.

The thesis elaborated by Marx in the 1844-52 period concerning the transition of the working class from a class in itself to a class for itself, had emphasized the "the proletariat during its contest with the bourgeoisie is compelled by the force of circumstances to organize itself as a class" "and consequently into a political party".¹¹⁶ According to this conception, the working class only becomes a social class when it is able to organize itself politically and thus become a social force.

However, such a conception, which made the political a defining characteristic of Marx's theory of social classes and also served to emphasize the importance of the political class struggle, remained somewhat ambiguous in terms of its specification of the transition from a class in itself to a class for itself. While the manner in which the transition was posed suggested the importance of both the objective and subjective dimensions of class, the nature of the transition was still infected with Hegelian overtones such that the universality and historical mission of the proletariat tended to render the transition automatic. At the same time, the relation between class in itself and class for itself was never explicitly articulated in terms of the political, ideological and

¹¹⁶ K. Marx, The Communist Manifesto, quoted in R. Miliband, Marxism and Politics, Op.Cit., p.22.

economic determinants of class formation and class struggle. Lacking an adequate theory of political economy, the relationship was derived to a large extent from a philosophy of history rather than from a scientifically based theory of the capitalist mode of production itself.

Although the relationship between class in itself and class for itself remained problematical for Marx's theory in the 1852-75 period, the development of his theory of the C.M.P., the transition from the "age of revolution" to the "age of capital," and the historical experiences of France and England which posed the problem of reform or revolution, assisted Marx in removing the Hegelian overtones that had infected his theory during the 1844-52 period, and provided a somewhat altered framework in which the relationship could be conceptualized. We will conclude our interpretation of Marx's theory of social classes by examining the nature of these alterations.

In considering the importance of both economic and political organization (trade unions and political parties) on the process of class formation and class struggle it is important to bear in mind Marx's conception of the effects of the structuration of classes upon individuals. In terms of the economic determination of class formation, Marx suggested,

"The principal agents of this mode of production itself, the capitalist and the wage labourer, are as such merely embodiments, personifications, of capital and wage labour; definite social characteristics stamped upon individuals by the process of social production; the products of these definite social production relations."¹¹⁷

From this perspective individuals may be represented as "embodiments of particular class relations and class interests"¹¹⁸ or as "the bearers of definite social relations"¹¹⁹ of production. For Marx,

¹¹⁷ K. Marx, Capital, Vol. 3, Op.Cit., p. 880.

¹¹⁸ K. Marx, Capital, Vol. 1, Op.Cit., p. 10.

¹¹⁹ K. Marx, Capital, Vol. 3, Op.Cit., p. 819.

the infrastructuralization and functional determination of class formation at the economic level results in the formation of a series of structures of positions in the production process amongst which the agents of production are distributed. And it is primarily the occupancy of these positions by the agents of production which results in their characterization as bearers or carriers of class relations and class interests.

However, we must incorporate this objective characterization of individuals as the bearers of class interests and class relations derived from their occupancy of a position in the production process with Marx's conception of classes as organized social forces. As will be shown, the linkage between these two conceptions is the political, ideological and economic class struggle. In discussing the problems of historical transformation and class struggle in terms of the relationship between the "economic foundation" and "the whole immense superstructure" Marx suggested that it is "the legal, political, religious, artistic or philosophic - in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out."¹²⁰ The meaning that can and should be attributed to this important proposition has been summarized in a different context by a contemporary theoretician in the following terms:

"Social reality is not given directly through our senses ... it is in the realm of ideology that people become aware of social relations, what people come to believe and what they happen to do is an outcome of a long term process of persuasion and organization by political and ideological forces engaged in numerous struggles for the realization of their goals. Social cleavages, the perception of social differentiation, are never given directly to our consciousness. Social differences acquire the status of cleavages as an outcome of ideological and political struggles."¹²¹

¹²⁰ K.Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, Op.Cit., p.21.

¹²¹ A.Przeworski, "The Process of Class Formation: From Karl Kautsky's Class Struggle to Recent Controversies", Op.Cit., pp.27-28.

From this standpoint, Marx's characterization of individuals as bearers of class relations and class interests should be regarded as an objective specification or summary of the manner in which the determinant effects of the economic structure of a social formation and the overdeterminant effects of the ideological and political superstructure are concentrated or condensed into a series of structures of positions within the production process.* These effects become personified or embodied in the agents who occupy these positions and who perform the functions that are attached to them. However, this does not imply that the concentration or condensation of determinant and overdeterminant effects are thereby translated into the consciousness of the respective agents. For Marx, this process is always mediated through the "ideological forms in which men become conscious of [their] conflicts and fight it out".

To express this formulation in another way, one might suggest that Marx's characterization of individuals as bearers of class relations and class interests is a metaphorical depiction of the underlying effects that are generated by the combination of the economic structure and the ideological and political superstructure. These underlying effects become "definite social characteristics stamped upon individuals by the process of social production". According to Marx, it is through these underlying effects that "individuals [become] imprisoned within a certain [class] definition".¹²² These underlying effects are described by Marx as "invisible threads",¹²³ and these invisible threads, which bind together the

* Production process here refers to its more broadly defined usage by Marx which would include state employees, intellectuals, etc.

¹²² K. Marx, Grundrisse, Op.Cit., p.163.

¹²³ K. Marx, Capital, Volume 1, Op.Cit., p.574.

agents of a social formation in relations of domination and subordination are, objectively speaking, inherently conflict-generating owing to the contradictions between the relations and forces of production and the contradictions between social classes. However, the extent to which these conflicts remain latent or manifest depends upon the ideological forms through which men and women become conscious of them. And as was pointed out earlier, the impact of these ideological forms upon the conscious activity of men and women is the result "of a long term process of persuasion and organization by political and ideological forces engaged in numerous struggles for the realization of their goals."¹²⁴

¹²⁴The general principle involved in Marx's conception of underlying effects being concentrated in the structure of positions within the production process and forming the basis for objective class interests and class relations has been utilized in a number of different ways by both Marxist and non-Marxist theoreticians. For example, in Ralf Dahrendorf's work, the proposition is put forward that: "For purposes of sociological analysis of conflict groups it is necessary to assume certain structurally generated orientations of the actions of incumbents of defined positions." (R. Dahrendorf, Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society, Op.Cit., p.175) Dahrendorf borrows the concepts of role and role interest from Parsonian integration theory and utilizes them (within the premises of conflict theory) to theoretically articulate the nature of "the structure of imperatively co-ordinated associations". For Dahrendorf, "Role interests are, from the point of view of the 'player' of roles, latent interests, i.e., undercurrents, of his behaviour which are predetermined for him for the duration of his incumbency of a role, and which are independent of his conscious orientations. As such they can, under conditions to be specified presently, become conscious goals which we shall correspondingly call manifest interests." (Ibid., p.185)

The "undercurrents" or underlying effects in Dahrendorf's model are essentially determined by the distribution of authority relations within the role structure of imperatively co-ordinated associations. Thus, the nature and structure of authority relations figure prominently as the determinant underlying effects.

Although the principle of underlying effects is present in both the work of Dahrendorf and Marx, there are important differences. Marx's analysis looks for deeper underlying effects which can be utilized to explain the structure of authority relations. In this respect, Marx's utilization of the principle of underlying effects

However, if one is to come to grips with this mediating role of ideological forms, then one must distinguish between Marx's conception of classes as the ensemble of these underlying effects and classes as organized social forces. For Marx, it was an essential feature of the process of class formation for the working class to become an organized social force. He constantly emphasized that "it is perfectly self evident that in order to be at all capable of struggle the working class must organize itself as a class..."¹²⁵ It is workers' "combinations that constitute the working class as a class antagonistic to the respectable category of masters, entrepreneurs and bourgeois."¹²⁶ For Marx, it is

is similar to Nicos Poulantzas' conception of the structural determination of social classes where

"social class is a concept which shows the effects of the ensemble of structures, of the matrix of a mode of production or of a social formation on the agents which constitute its supports: this concept reveals the effects of the global structure in the field of social relations. In this sense ... it [class] designates the effect of an ensemble of given structures, an ensemble which determines social relations as class relations" (N. Poulantzas, Political Power and Social Classes, Op.Cit., pp. 67-68)

There is also an important difference between Marx, Dahrendorf and Poulantzas on the question of how these underlying effects are mediated by ideological forms. Dahrendorf adopts the useful distinction between latent and manifest interests, but places it within a framework where class divisions are replaced by authority divisions. In doing so, he not only establishes the criteria for a plurality of classes that emerge from a multiplicity of imperatively co-ordinated associations, but he also implicitly replaces class consciousness with the notion of "group consciousness" which is defined by essentially different criteria. Poulantzas, by adopting his conception of "objective" regional ideological structures ends up with what Professor Miliband has called "a form of superstructural determinism" where the concept of class consciousness is abandoned and condemned as a product of the historicist problematic. Unlike Poulantzas and Dahrendorf, Marx maintained that the ideological forms that mediate these underlying effects give rise to class struggle and class organizations. And it is through struggle and organization that consciousness of class arises and in turn effects the future development of both organization and struggle.

¹²⁵ K. Marx, The First International and After, Op.Cit., p.350.

¹²⁶ Ibid., p.331.

organization that enables "the working class to constitute itself as a militant 'class...'"¹²⁷

The organization of the working class into a class, into a social force, was considered by Marx to take place within the class struggle. The dominant classes with their direct and indirect control of political, economic and ideological institutions were always erecting "barriers" (whether of a legal/political nature or through the impact of the dominant ideology) that prevented forms of working class organization that could confront their rule. Thus, for Marx, to organize the working class into a social force with its own institutions and its own ideology, and to utilize the organized force of this class "with the object of enforcing its interests in a general form", was an important feature of the class struggle.

- The two fundamental forms of working class organization that Marx discussed in terms of class formation were trade unions and the working class political party. He considered trade unions as essential, but primarily defensive, organizations of the working class, while the political party was the major offensive form of working class action. According to Marx,

"Trade unions work well as centres of resistance against the encroachments of capital. They fail partially from an injudicious use of their power. They fail generally from limiting themselves to a guerrilla war against the effects of the existing system, instead of simultaneously trying to change it, instead of using their organized forces as a lever for the final emancipation of the working class, that is to say, the ultimate abolition of the wage system."¹²⁸

This of course was not to deny the important role that trade unions played in the class struggle. Through their organizational activities they mitigated the effects of competition which produced

¹²⁷ Ibid., p.324.

¹²⁸ K.Marx, Wage, Price and Profit, Op.Cit., p.229.

so much "disunion" within the working class. They could also act as important organizational forms for the development of class consciousness by enabling the workers to overcome their deference to capitalist forms of "officialdom and higher authority". Trade unions were a major force for securing the implementation of legislation to protect or extend the limited rights of workers. In this respect Marx pointed out "this activity of the trade unions is not only legitimate, it is necessary. It cannot be dispensed with so long as the present system of production lasts."¹²⁹

However, Marx pointed out that the trade union movement was too often "bent upon the local and immediate struggles with capital...". They too often confined their activities to the "questions of wages and time of labour". While these were important struggles, they tended to preoccupy the attention of the trade unions keeping them "too much aloof from general social and political movements".¹³⁰ Such activity tended to perpetuate sectional differences in both the trade union movement and the working class when in fact what was needed was support and solidarity amongst "the whole working class". In the final analysis, it was, for Marx, a question of the important distinction that must be drawn between the political and the economic class struggle. As he pointed out,

"As to the limitation of the working day in England, as in all other countries, it has never been settled except by legislative interference. Without the working man's continuous pressure from without, that interference would never have taken place. But at all events, the result was not to be attained by private settlement between the working men and the capitalists. The very necessity of general political action affords the proof that in its merely economic action, capital is the stronger side."¹³¹

Thus it is around "the power of the state, the concentrated and organized force of society,"¹³² that the class struggle gravitates

¹²⁹ K.Marx, The First International and After, Op.Cit., p.91.

¹³⁰ Ibid., pp.91-92.

¹³¹ K.Marx, Wage, Price and Profit, Op.Cit., p.226.

¹³² K.Marx, Capital, Vol.1, Op.Cit., p.751.

and is ultimately resolved. Accordingly, the working class must direct its organized forces against the class based power of the state and to do this, to engage in the political class struggle successfully, an extra economic agency is required: the working class political party.

"The combination of forces which the working class has already effected by its economical struggles ought at the same time to serve as a lever for its struggles against the political power of landlords and capitalists ... against this collective power of the propertied classes the working class cannot act as a class except by constituting itself into a political party, distinct from, and opposed to, all old parties formed by the propertied classes... This constitution of the working class into a political party is indispensable in order to ensure the triumph of the social revolution and its ultimate end - the abolition of classes."¹³³

¹³³ K.Marx, The First International and After, Op.Cit., p.270. One must be very careful in attempting to specify the relationships that Marx articulated involving class, party and trade unions. In general, Marx maintained that the three forces had to be enjoined, "indissolubly united" in order to confront the "concentrated social force" represented by capital. However, Marx was never clear on the form that this relationship was to take, and certainly this lack of clarification leads to ambiguity and contradictory interpretations. It would perhaps be fair to say that, for Marx, only concrete practice would provide these answers, and that such practice would provide the basis for continuous development and redevelopment of theory which must always take into account the specific nature of the conjuncture of relations and the balance of class forces.

Although he emphasized the important role that the party must play, Marx never discounted the important political role that the trade unions could and should adopt. His criticism of trade unionism was primarily based on how the craft based skilled workers' unions tended to neglect the importance of the political class struggle by abandoning class based interests for more narrowly defined occupational interests. The following passage, taken from a speech to German trade unionists in 1869, shows, I think, not only Marx's optimistic conception of the importance and revolutionary potential of trade unions, but also indicates a very interesting point about the relationship between the unions and the political party.

"If they wish to accomplish their task, trade unions ought never to be attached to a political association or place themselves under its tutelage; to do so would be to deal them a mortal blow. Trade unions are the schools of socialism. It is in trade unions that workers educate themselves and become socialists because under their very eyes and every day, the struggle with capital is taking place. Any political party,

Although Marx insisted that the working class party must be a distinct organization, completely separate from the traditional parties representing other social classes, his analysis is very vague with little or no analysis of its specific organizational form. In terms of the performance of the ideological function of the party, he emphasized that this would be enhanced by the presence of "educative elements" from outside the working class who joined the proletarian cause. However, he was quick to add that "when such people from other classes join the proletarian party, the first requirement is that they do not bring any remnants of bourgeois, petty-bourgeois, etc. prejudices with them, but that they adopt the proletarian outlook without prevarication."¹³⁴

Marx also emphasized, as against those proclaiming "political indifferentism", that the working class party should participate and struggle for reforms within the framework of a limited "bourgeois democracy" to extend that framework and gain immediate reforms, although never in this process losing sight of the goal of the complete emancipation of the working class and the abolition of all social classes. However given the somewhat ambiguous nature of Marx's analysis and at times his almost blinding faith in the revolutionary nature of the workers' movement, one must agree with David Fernbach's suggestions that Marx did not "leave a theoretical space for the possibility of a workers' movement that is organized politically as a class and yet struggles solely for reforms

whatever its nature and without exception, can only hold the enthusiasm of the masses for a short time, momentarily; unions, on the other hand, lay hold on the masses in a more enduring way: they alone are capable of representing a true working class party and opposing a bulwark to the power of capital." (Quoted in R.Miliband, Marxism and Politics, Op.Cit., pp.132-133.)

¹³⁴ K.Marx, The First International and After, Op.Cit., p.374.

within the capitalist system". Thus, "lacking a structural explanation of working class reformism", Marx never believed nor understood "that reformism could take serious and systematic root in the working class".¹³⁵

From this standpoint, Marx's analysis of the role of the working class party in the political class struggle was both inadequate and incomplete. However, in fairness to Marx's own work and in the light of the contemporary developments, it is important to bear in mind the fundamental proposition that he always adhered to: "the emancipation of the working class must be the work of the working class itself". In this respect, as Professor Miliband has suggested,

"What Marx and Engels were concerned to stress was their general belief in the self-emancipating capacities of the working class. The question here is not whether they were right or wrong, and what are the problems they were overlooking. The fact is that for them the class always came first, the party a long way behind. This cuts very deep, and has a direct bearing on the wider question of the direct and indirect exercise of popular power, and on the meaning of socialist democracy."¹³⁶

This analysis of the organization of the working class into a class, into a social force, provides us with a somewhat different conception of the nature of the transition from a class in itself to a class for itself, then was developed by Marx during the 1844-52 period. In both periods, the nature of the transition is linked to the development of the C.M.P. and the process of class formation. And, in both periods, the nature of the transition is specified in terms of changes in the degree of class organization, the level of class consciousness, and the form of participation in the political class struggle!

¹³⁵ Ibid., pp.59,63.

¹³⁶ R.Miliband, Marxism and Politics, Op.Cit., p.120.

However, in the German Ideology, Marx's proposition that the working class is already a class as against capital but not yet for itself, even before the working class has been organized as a class, as a social force, is somewhat ambiguous. The writings in the 1852-75 period provide an explanation for this problem, and whether or not it is regarded as satisfactory, it certainly reflects a deeper comprehension of the process of class formation and the concept of class power.

In the 1852-75 period, Marx's conception of the process of class formation at the economic level embraces the dual processes of the infrastructuralization and functional determination of class formation. These dual processes impose specific structures and functions upon the two sets of relations of production (those of the labour process and those of the surplus value creating process) that combine to make up the production process. Within the structures of positions of the production process amongst which the agents of production are distributed, the underlying effects of the combined economic structure and the ideological/political superstructure are condensed and concentrated so that the agents of these positions become bearers of objective class relations and class interests. At this level, classes are much more than "sacks of potatoes" or "empty places" whose occupants have the same objective class interests. Inscribed within the relations of production and the structures of positions within the production process are latent relationships of class power. These are derived from the structuration of relations of domination and subordination that result in one class having the latent capacity to control other people's labour power, thus maximizing their capacity to realize their objective interests while at the same time minimizing this same latent capacity within other social classes. It is this

conception which renders Marx's conception of class in itself more intelligible and comprehensive than his earlier formulation.¹³⁷

However, at this level of class in itself, social classes are not organized social forces. What Marx called "the latent power of the working class"¹³⁸ (and thus the latent power of other social

¹³⁷This is not to suggest that Marx reduces the concept of social classes to the concept of class position. For example, there is his conception of class situation (or to use E.P. Thompson's terminology, class "as a socio-cultural formation") which embraces what Marx called the "bonds" of "social connectedness" or "common situation" of social classes (family, traditions, cultural activities, etc.) which objectively speaking, form part of the conception of class in itself. However, Marx's theoretical articulation of the concept class situation remained undeveloped in both his early and later writings. It would appear perhaps that, for Marx, the class situation has much more to do with the notion of class for itself in terms of being a mediating "ideological form" through which consciousness of class develops.

¹³⁸K. Marx, The First International and After, Op.Cit., p.99. The specification of class power that we have given in regard to Marx's conception of class in itself (the latent capacity of one class through the control over other people's labour power to maximize their capacity of realizing their objective interests while at the same time minimizing this same latent capacity within other social classes) is derived in part from Nicos Poulantzas who suggested, "By power we shall designate the capacity of a social class to realize its specific objective interests." In discussing this conception of power in terms of organization and class struggle, Poulantzas adds

"The capacity of a class to realize its interests, of which the organization of its power is the necessary condition, depends on the capacity of other classes to realize their interests. The degree of effective power of a class depends directly on the degree of power of the other classes, in the framework of the determination of class practices in the limits set by the practices of other classes." (N. Poulantzas, Social Classes and Political Power, Op.Cit., pp.104,108)

We would suggest that our specification of class power and that of Poulantzas most closely resembles the meaning that Marx intended for three reasons. Firstly, Marx uses or implies the usage of the concept "latent power" on several occasions. Secondly, in speaking of the class character of political movements, Marx suggests that they have as their purpose "the object of enforcing its [the class] interest in general form, in a form possessing general socially

classes as well) only manifests itself during the course of class struggle, during the course of organizing classes into social forces. Latent relationships of power may be inscribed within the institutional structure of a social formation, within its relations of production, and the structures of positions within the production process. They may form part of what Marx called the "internal organization" of the C.M.P., its "hidden substratum", its "invisible threads". However, these latent relations of economic, political and ideological power are never fixed. And, for Marx, it is the class struggle that settles the limits of class power, limits which are always in the process of being altered, thus

coercive force" (K.Marx, letter to Bolte, Nov.23, 1871, quoted in Ibid., p.107). This conception certainly involves the capacity of a class to realize its interests. Thirdly, in speaking of the power of the capitalist, Marx points out "what we have to do is not talk about his will, but inquire into his power, the limits of that power, and the character of those limits". (K.Marx, Wage, Price and Profit, Op.Cit., p.188). This third passage adds the important dimension of "limits" to the concept of power, and emphasizes the objective character of power by discounting the subjective dimension of will. This third passage should not be confused with the conception of power associated with elite theory or the notion of power as a form of interpersonal relations or individual power. Marx made this point clear in the 1844-52 period by emphasizing that "capital is therefore not a personal but a social power ... a social power capable of being monopolized". (K.Marx, The Communist Manifesto, Op.Cit., p.121.) He emphasized the same point in the 1860's by pointing out "The capitalist himself only holds power as the personification of capital". (K.Marx, Theories of Surplus Value, Vol.1, Op.Cit., p.389) In the final analysis a good summation of Marx's conception of power in terms of class struggle is provided by Poulantzas who states

"The concept of power is related to that precise type of social relation which is characterized by class 'conflict' and class struggle; that is to a field inside which precisely because of the existence of classes, the capacity of one class to realize its own interests through its practice is in opposition to the capacity and interests of other classes. This determines a specific relation of domination and subordination of class practices, which is exactly characterized as a relation of power." (N.Poulantzas, Social Classes and Political Power, Op.Cit., p.105)

altering the capacity of a class "for enforcing its interest in general form". It is for this reason that the organization of a class as a social force, and more importantly for Marx, as a political force, is a necessary condition for the realization of class interests.

This formulation does not imply that for Marx the class struggle is solely responsible for changing relationships of power, or that the class struggle always takes place with equal degrees of intensity. As he pointed out, there are particular conjunctures during which "the class struggle is latent or manifests itself only in isolated and sporadic phenomena".¹³⁹ Religious conflict, nationalism, wars between nations, and racial relations are all important forms of conflict and struggle involving relationships of power which Marx takes into account in the course of his analysis, and which may or may not be more or less directly related to the struggle between classes. For Marx, these other forms of conflict most certainly have an impact on the process of class formation although one could suggest that they are of a peripheral nature in comparison to the overriding importance that he attached to the impact of class struggle on the process of class formation. In general, Marx was content to say that these other forms of conflict are part of the "innumerable different empirical circumstances ... which can be ascertained only by analysis of empirically given circumstances."¹⁴⁰

In turning our attention more directly to the ideological and political-class struggle, it may be said that Marx's conception of the latent and manifest forms that the class struggle may exhibit

¹³⁹ Marx's preface to the second edition of volume one of Capital, (London: Moore and Aveling, 1886), pp.xxi-xxiii, quoted in M.Dobb, Theories of Value and Distribution Since Adam Smith, Op.Cit., pp.28-29.

¹⁴⁰ K.Marx, Capital, Volume 3, Op.Cit., p.792.

depending on the organization and balance of class forces, was useful during the 1852-75 period for developing his theory of the role and nature of the state, the relative autonomy of the state, and to a lesser extent, the translation of class power into state power. In his discussion of the development of the C.M.P. in France, Marx pointed out,

"[As] the modern struggle of classes, the struggle between labour and capital assumed shape and form, the physiognomy and the character of the state power underwent a striking change. It had always been the power for the maintenance of order, ie., the existing order of society, and therefore, of the subordination and exploitation of the producing class by the appropriating class. But as long as this order was accepted as an uncontrovertible and uncontested necessity, the state power could assume an aspect of impartiality. It kept up the existing subordination of the masses which was the unalterable order of things and a social fact undergone without contest on the part of the masses, exercised by their "natural superiors" without solicitude. With the entrance of society itself into a new phase, the phase of class struggle, the character of its organized public force, the state power, could not but change also (but also undergo a marked change) and more and more develop its character as the instrument of class-despotism, the political engine forcibly perpetuating ... the economic rule of capital over labour. After each new popular revolution resulting in the transfer of the direction of the state-machinery from one set of ruling classes to another, the repressive character of the state power was more fully developed and more mercilessly used because the promises made and seemingly assured by the Revolution could only be broken by the employment of force. Besides, the change worked by the successive revolutions sanctioned only politically the social fact, the growing power of capital, and therefore, transferred the state power itself more and more directly into the hands of the direct antagonists of the working class. Thus the Revolution of July [1830] transferred the power from hands of the landowners to those of the great manufacturers (the great capitalists) and the Revolution of February [1848] into those of the united fractions of the ruling class, united in their antagonism to the working class, united as the party of order, the order of their own class rule."¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹K.Marx, The Civil War in France, (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1970), pp.229-230.

In this passage and for the next several pages of that text, Marx reaffirms the analysis he had developed in the 1844-52 period concerning the relations between class power and state power. The conception of the ruling class being composed of "rival fractions" where one fraction may exercise hegemonic dominance politically and economically or where several fractions may be consolidated to form a "united" ruling class; the notion of the state as "the instrument of class despotism"; the linkage between changes in class struggle and class formation, and changes in the structure of the state; all of these factors re-emerge in Marx's work although, as was the case previously, the theoretical analysis is somewhat vague and ambiguous.

At the same time, however, the notion of the relative autonomy of the state (which in the 1844-52 period had been considered primarily in terms of Bonapartism) is more closely linked than it had been previously to the specific character of the class struggle and to the specific functions of the state. In this particular passage Marx points out that with the advent of revolution in France particularly in the immediate periods surrounding 1789, 1830, and 1848, French society entered into "the phase of class struggle", which resulted in the state having to constantly exercise its coercive force in the interests of the dominant classes. For Marx, this reactivation of the coercive function of the state was necessitated by the state's inability to satisfactorily perform its ideological/legitimation function. Here Marx indicates that during the phase of class struggle the relative autonomy of the state was minimized or lost through a crisis of legitimation so that during numerous periods between 1789 and 1848 "the promises made and seemingly assured by the revolution [to the subordinate classes] could only be broken by the employment force". Prior to this phase of class struggle, Marx suggests "as long as this order was accepted as an uncontrovertible and uncontested necessity the state could assume an aspect of impartiality".

Thus, this would appear to suggest at least in this particular instance that, for Marx, the relative autonomy of the state is greatest when the class struggle is latent or less intense and where accordingly the state may perform each of its functions (coercive, legitimation, economic) with a degree of impartiality. On the other hand, the state's relative autonomy is minimized or lost when the class struggle becomes manifest or much more intense and where accordingly through a functional imbalance (defined as the inability of the state to perform all three of its functions with an equal degree of impartiality), which may be precipitated by a legitimation or accumulation crisis, the state's ability to perform these functions with a degree of impartiality is minimized to a greater or lesser extent.

We readily admit the tentative nature of this formulation, and it would certainly have to be tested against all of Marx's writings to see if it represented the general case. For example, one would have to reconcile this conception of the state's relative autonomy with Marx's conception of the balance of class forces. For, as Poulantzas has pointed out, Marx and Engels "most frequently have recourse to a general explanation of the state's relative autonomy when the classes in struggle are 'close to equilibrium'. In this sense, Marx says in The Civil War in France that Bonapartism is explained by that moment 'when the bourgeoisie had already lost, [and] the working class had not yet gained the ability to govern the nation'."¹⁴² And, in attempting to reconcile these conceptions of the state's relative autonomy, we are faced with a general problem of interpretation that may or may not be resolvable. For, in making such formulations through abstraction from Marx's work we always run the risk of illegitimately taking

¹⁴²N. Poulantzas, Political Power and Social Classes, Op.Cit., p.259.

one or several historical phenomena discussed by Marx and ascribing to it a general theoretical status that Marx may or may not have intended to attribute to the role and nature of the capitalist state. In this respect, there is still much work to be done in terms of researching and interpreting Marx's theory of the state.

The problems that are raised by Marx concerning the relative autonomy of the state are of course closely linked to the process involving the translation of class power into state power. In the 1844-52 period, Marx had discussed this translation process in terms of the personnel of the state, the impact of economic domination, and the presence of structural constraints. Although his writings in the 1852-75 period appear to affirm the presence of these three conceptions in relation to the translation problem, they do not consume as much of Marx's attention as they had previously, owing to an important historical development.

In the 1844-52 period, Marx's theory of the political was primarily developed through his writings on France where his analysis was very much concerned with the relation between class power and state power, and in particular with the relations between the various fractions of the ruling class, their control (direct and indirect) of political power, and the impact of the class struggle on that control. However, with the emergence of the Paris Commune in 1871, Marx's political writings focus much more on the nature of state in terms of proletarian political power, the theory of revolution and the nature of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Because of this change in Marx's political writings on France, and because in Capital Marx only intended to lay the economic foundation for the theory of the state, Marx's political writings from 1852-75 add very little that could clarify his often times ambiguous formulations concerning the manner in which class power is translated

into political power. Perhaps more than anything else, this problem remains as what Miliband called "the Achilles heel" of Marxism.¹⁴³

¹⁴³ This is not to suggest that Marx's theory of the political is absent in Capital and perhaps a more extensive analysis of many of the implicit implications that arise from this work could and should be made. Although in Capital Marx does not elaborate in any great detail on the role and nature of the capitalist state, there is one particular chapter in volume one which contains an outstanding historical and empirical analysis of class power, state power, and the ideological, political and economic class struggle. It is in this chapter, entitled "The Working Day", where Marx argues that "in the history of capitalist production, the determination of what is a working day presents itself as the result of a struggle, a struggle between collective capital i.e., the class of capitalists, and the collective labour i.e., the working class." (K.Marx, Capital, Vol.1, Op.Cit., p.235) Here Marx discusses the economic, political and social ramifications of the changing relations between necessary and surplus labour time, and how the class struggle, which brought about the intervention of the state and the enactment of the factory acts, at the same time precipitated the transfer from the production of absolute surplus value to the production of relative surplus value. In the course of his analysis, Marx provides a further specification of the economic function of the state. For Marx, not only must the capitalist state provide or maintain advantageous conditions for the accumulation of capital, but the state must also fulfill the often contradictory corollary of this function which involves ensuring the presence of those conditions necessary to satisfy "the first birthright of capital which is the equal exploitation of labour power by all capitalists." (K.Marx, Capital, Vol.1, Op.Cit., p.292).

Marx provides an excellent example of this contradictory aspect of the state's economic function in his discussions of the protests made by various manufacturers who were made subject to the factory acts while many of their competitors were not thus creating unequal conditions for the exploitation of labour power. In this situation, a "compromise" was reached as the state attempted to extend the application of the factory acts on a national scale even though this often resulted "in a hopelessly bewildering tangle of enactments". (Ibid., pp.291-93, 300, 490-492) In order to satisfy this often contradictory economic function, Marx emphasized that "Capital undertakes only advantageous undertakings, advantageous in its sense". Thus, when certain conditions are required by the whole capitalist class for the advantageous accumulation of capital, conditions which in order to be implemented would not yield a satisfactory rate or level of profit (certain infrastructural developments, etc.) "then capital shifts the burden on the shoulders

Despite this and other serious limitations, the theoretical developments that Marx initiated during the 1852-75 period, and the consequences for the ideological and political dimensions of class formation and class struggle, represent a substantial contribution to the development of his theory of social classes. His clarification of the concept class in itself, the distinction between class in itself and classes as organized social forces, the increased emphasis on the overriding importance of the political class struggle, the elimination of the historicist conception of the transition from class in itself to class for itself. All of these developments assisted Marx in developing his conception of class within a broader and a somewhat more specifiable conception of totality. And all of these developments served to make the concept of class of greater theoretical utility, without at the same time removing the human dimension that this conception involves in the relationships of real men and women as they make and remake their history.

Throughout the course of this thesis, we have been aware of the problem of trying to strike a balance between Marx's usage of class as a theoretical construct and his insistence that this concept only summarizes the only too real human dimension of social relationships. There is a tendency to forget that while Capital represents Marx's theoretical articulation of the objective relationships obtaining between social classes within social formations marked by the presence and dominance of the C.M.P., it also represents a social history

of the state (K.Marx, Grundrisse, p.531) In such a situation the state "performs the function of industrial capitalists" (K.Marx, Capital, Vol.2, p.97) and does so in such a way as to permit "the equal exploitation of labour power by all capitalists". It is from this conception of the economic function of the state that one can see how for Marx the role and nature of the capitalist state is intimately bound up with the contradictions between social classes and between relations and forces of production. And it is also from this same conception that Marx's 1848 formulation that "the executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie" is rendered more complete and more intelligible. (K.Marx and F.Engels, The Communist Manifesto, Op.Cit., p.163).

of capitalist development concerning the real men and women who participated in the making and remaking of social structure.

For example, Marx's theory of exploitation consists of the four categories of alienation and the theory of surplus value involving the quantifiable relationship between surplus and necessary labour time. At the same time, Marx explains this theory in terms of individuals such as Mary Anne Walkley, William Wood, and various collectivities of men and women such as the London Bakers, the hand loom weavers, as well as those who worked in blast furnaces, forges and plate rolling mills. Marx's theory of exploitation was derived from their existence; it was not prefabricated to make their existence conform with his theory. In speaking of these people, their dismal conditions of existence marked by overwork and underpay, and the numerous physical and spiritual casualties that they suffered, Marx pointed out "These were ordinary men, not cyclops. And at a certain point their labour power failed". The theory of exploitation seeks to answer the question of why this was the case.

Marx's theory of the separation of conception from execution involves a theoretical specification of the transition from the production of absolute to relative surplus value, the increase in the technical division of labour and the corresponding relative devaluation of labour power, and the depletion and decomposition of aggregated human skills in relative proportion to the increase in the organic composition of capital. It is also presented by Marx to indicate the consequences that were endured by many groups of working people such as the Nuremberg needlemakers who at one point in time required the skill and knowledge to perform individually more than twenty different operations in the forging of their product. With the advent of a capitalist market society, the

"strength, skill, quickness and sureness" embodied within their working capacity was no longer deemed necessary or rational by market standards. Their skills and knowledge were absorbed by machinery having its "animating unity" elsewhere and for other purposes, while the working men themselves were relegated to the monotonous task of performing a simple single detail function requiring little or no skill and knowledge.*

We emphasize this point not to try and present Marx's work as that of a benevolent humanist or to consecrate an aura of lament for the proud craft traditions of the past. These developments, for Marx, were always of a dialectical nature and in this respect they were part of what Marx called "the civilizing mission of capital" which resulted in the enormous increase in the productive forces of society, thus laying the basis for a future mode of production which could and would be of a truly social nature. Capitalist development and the relationship between social classes never represented for Marx the conflict between "good guys" and "bad guys" producing both "good effects and bad effects". As he emphasized in his critique of Proudhon in 1847, and in his work in the 1860's, the two faces of capitalist development are

* In a similar vein, Marx points out, "In the English letter-press printing trade, for example, there existed formerly a system corresponding to that in the old manufacturers and handicrafts, of advancing the apprentices from easy to more and more difficult work. They went through a course of teaching till they were finished printers. To be able to read and write was for everyone of them a requirement of their trade. All this was changed by the printing machine. It employs two sorts of labourers, one grown up, tenters, the other, boys mostly from 11 to 17 years of age, whose sole business is either to spread the sheets of paper under the machine or to take from it the printed sheets. They perform this weary task in London especially, for 14, 15, and 16 hours at a stretch ... A great part of them cannot read ... to qualify for the work which they have to do, they require no intellectual training; there is little room in it for skill, and less for judgement." (K.Marx, Capital, Vol.1, Op.Cit., pp.484-485.)

necessarily bound together in an indissoluble unity which reveals the contradictions of the capitalist mode of production. These contradictions were not derived or comprehended by Marx through ethical considerations. As he emphasized, "what you think just or equitable is out of the question. The question is what is necessary and unavoidable with a given system of production."¹⁴⁴

In the final analysis, while Althusser and others are quite correct in emphasizing the importance of Marx's proposition that "my analytical method does not start from man but from the economically given social period,"¹⁴⁵ one should also bear in mind, particularly in relation to Marx's conception of the separation of conception from execution, that rightly or wrongly Marx always emphasized the inherent creative capacity of men and women and the necessity for them to satisfy this capacity in both work and leisure activity. And in a similar vein, he understood class relationships as an expression of how human relationships are lived and experienced by real men and women. Bearing these distinctions in mind, we would like to conclude this thesis with one final point that is linked to Marx's theory of social classes and to this relationship between class as a theoretical construct for studying reality and class as the lived and experienced expression of that reality. This point concerns Marx's concept of commodity fetishism.

In considering Marx's concept of class for itself, we emphasized that for Marx class consciousness develops through culture, organization and struggle. Although the material conditions of existence provide the framework within which culture, organization and struggle develop, the forms of consciousness that emerge within this material framework are always mediated by the "ideological

¹⁴⁴ K.Marx, Wage Price and Profit, Op.Cit., p.211.

¹⁴⁵ K.Marx, "Randglossen Zus Wagners Lehrbuch...1879-1880", quoted in L.Althusser, For Marx, Op.Cit., p.219.

forms" through which men and women become conscious of their social relationships. According to Marx, one of the crucial aspects of class relations concerns the manner in which the capitalist class monopolizes direct and indirect control of the production and reproduction of these ideological forms which become embodied within traditions, value systems, social relations and social institutions, the totality of which constitutes the "dominant" ideology or the "ruling ideas" of a society.

In examining the role and nature of this dominant ideology, Marx maintained that "the contradictions of material production make necessary a superstructure of ideological strata,"¹⁴⁶ and the "existence of these strata, like the function they perform, can only be understood from the specific historical structure of their production relations".¹⁴⁷ In the C.M.P., these "ideological functionaries" perform another aspect of the "work of control". They provide the cohesion and stability required by "any mode of production" by producing and distributing the "ideological forms" that mask (or when necessary, legitimate) the contradictions between social classes and the contradictions between the forces and relations of production. It was for this reason that Marx emphasized that these ideological functionaries, these "hired prize fighters" of the ruling class, perform an invaluable function for the maintenance of the relations of domination and subordination that perpetuate the existence of the dominant classes, and their control over other people's labour power. And it was for this reason that Marx emphasized the importance of the ideological class struggle where the working class must produce its own ideological forms, its own ideological functionaries and institutions, to combat what he

¹⁴⁶ K.Marx, Theories of Surplus Value, Vol.1, Op.Cit., p.287.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p.287.

at one point called "bourgeois common sense"¹⁴⁸ and the manner in which it becomes incorporated into the dominant ideology of a society.

However, in his discussions of the impact of the dominant ideology on the development of consciousness, Marx maintained that there is another reason why, in the words of one scholar, "the social agents experience capitalist society as something other than it really is".¹⁴⁹ According to Marx, the production, reproduction, distribution and maintenance of the dominant ideology is facilitated by the very nature of capitalist society itself. For, within capitalist society, there is a "mystical veil" that envelopes "the life-process of society", there is a specific form and a specific process that severs the threads between essence and appearance so that "the vein of internal connections is increasingly lost". For Marx, this form and this process which involves both mystification and domination concerns the most basic unit of the capitalist mode of production: the commodity.

"A commodity appears at first sight, a very trivial thing, and easily understood. Its analysis shows that it is, in reality, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties... A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves but between the products of their labour ... the existence of things qua commodities and the value relation between the products of labour which stamps them as commodities, have absolutely no connection with their physical properties and with the material relations arising there from. There is a definite social relation between men that assumes in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things ... This I call the Fetishism which attaches

¹⁴⁹N.Geras, "Marx and the Critique of Political Economy", in R.Blackburn, editor, Ideology in Social Science, Op.Cit., p.286. I am indebted to Professor Geras for the thesis concerning Marx's concept of commodity fetishism as both a form of mystification and domination.

¹⁴⁸K.Marx, Capital, Vol.1, Op.Cit., pp.71-72.

itself to the products of labour, so soon as they are produced as commodities, and which is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities."150

One of the best summaries of what Marx meant by commodity fetishism was expressed by one writer in the following terms. For Marx, "There is in fact a dual process involved: objects take on the properties of human beings, they become personified; human beings take on the characteristics of things, they become reified."151 It was particularly in regard to this conception of reification that Marx utilized the conception of commodity fetishism to express in theoretical terms what happens to social relationships between men and women and their perception of these relationships in social formations characterized by generalized commodity production, where the production of use values is subordinated to production for realizing exchange values. It is this conception of reification where "definite social relations between men and women assume in their eyes the fantastic form of a relation between things" that enabled Marx to explain the mystification that surrounds the buying and selling of labour power, the domination imposed by the relations of control that enable capital to monopolize other people's labour power, and the combined mystification and domination that imposes itself on the relations between the labourers, their work, and the product of their labour.

"The labourer is the owner of his labour power until he has done bargaining for its sale with the capitalist; and he can sell no more than what he has, ie., his individual, isolated labour. This state of things is in no way altered by the fact that the capitalist instead of buying the labour power of one man, buys that of 100 and enters into separate contracts with

150 K.Marx, Capital, Vol.1, Op.Cit., pp.71-72.

151 R.Lichtman, "Marx's Theory of Ideology", Socialist Revolution #23, (Vol.5, #1, April.1975), p.59.

100 unconnected men instead of with one. He is at liberty to set the 100 men to work without letting them co-operate. He pays them the value of 100 independent labour powers but he does not pay for the combined power of the hundred. Being independent of each other, the labourers are isolated persons who enter into relations with the capitalist, but not with one another. This co-operation begins only with the labour process, but they have ceased to belong to themselves. On entering that process, they become incorporated with capital. Hence, the productive power developed by the labourer when working in co-operation is the productive power of capital. This power is developed gratuitously whenever the workmen are placed under given conditions, and it is capital that places them under such conditions. Because this power costs capital nothing, and because on the other hand the labourer himself does not develop it before his labour belongs to capital, it appears as a power with which capital is endowed by nature - a productive power that is imminent in capital."152

Thus:

"Capital comes more and more to the fore as a social power whose agent is the capitalist. This social power no longer stands in any possible relation to that which the labour of a single individual can create. It becomes an alienated, independent, social power which stands opposed to society as an object, and as an object that is the capitalist's source of power."153

For Marx, it is this aspect of commodity fetishism that serves to reinforce the existence of social classes by reinforcing capital's control over other people's labour power. In doing so, it perpetuates the existence of a system that is characterized by massive political and economic inequality as well as cultural deprivation.¹⁵⁴

However, the concept of commodity fetishism has another important ramification for Marx's theory of social classes that concerns the utilization of the concept of class as a theoretical

¹⁵² K.Marx, Capital, Vol.1, pp.332-333.

¹⁵³ K.Marx, Capital, Vol.3, quoted in N.Geras, "Marx and the Critique of Political Economy" in R.Blackburn, editor, Ideology in Social Science, Op.Cit., p.290.

¹⁵⁴ For Marx's discussions of cultural deprivation see K.Marx, Capital, Vol.1, Op.Cit., chapter 10, especially pp.259, 393-402.

construct for studying reality and class as a lived and experienced dimension of that reality. Because of the tendency of reification where "definite social relations between men and women assumes in their eyes the fantastic form of a relation between things", there emerges three fundamental misconceptions in the scientific investigation of the capitalist mode of production which Marx attempted to rectify. These three errors which Marx deals with throughout his work are composed of the following tendencies:

- 1) There emerges a tendency to treat capital as a thing as so many goods and services, as so many commodities. This same tendency is applied to social relationships and to relations between classes.
- 2) There emerges a tendency to treat society in terms of the activity of the individual, the behaviour of the individual, and to see consciousness as an individual product.
- 3) There emerges a tendency to abstract theoretical categories from social relationships without situating these social relationships within a historical context, and in doing so this results in treating these theoretical categories as permanent fixtures, valid for all time.

In addressing himself to this first tendency, Marx emphasized, "Capital is not a thing, but rather a definite social production relation belonging to a definite historical formation of society which is manifested in a specific social character".¹⁵⁵ In addressing himself to the second tendency, he emphasized

"Society does not consist of individuals; it expresses the sum of connections and relationships in which individuals find themselves. It is as though one were to say: from the standpoint of society there are neither slaves nor citizens;

¹⁵⁵ K.Marx, Capital, Vol.1, quoted in N.Geras, "Marx and the Critique of Political Economy", in R.Blackburn, editor, Ideology in Social Science, Op.Cit., p.296.

both are men. Rather they are so outside society. To be a slave or to be a citizen are social determinations, the relationships of Man A and Man B. Man A is not a slave as such. He is a slave within society and because of it."156

And finally in addressing himself to this third tendency in his critique of the French political economist Henri Storch, Marx pointed out:

"Because Storch does not conceive material production itself historically, because he conceives it as production of material goods in general, not as a definite historically developed and specific form of this production - he deprives himself of the basis on which alone can be understood partly the ideological component parts of the ruling class, partly the free spiritual production of this political social formation. [Thus] he cannot get beyond meaningless general phrases."157

It was by criticizing these three tendencies throughout his work and in many different ways that Marx attempted to demystify the effects of commodity fetishism and of the dominant ideology as it was embedded within the orthodox social science of his own day. In doing so he developed his own theory of social class as a rigorous theoretical construct for studying reality and as a lived and experienced dimension of that reality. The fundamental premises that Marx's concept of class rests upon are clearly evident in the passages quoted above. In each case, he emphasizes the historical dimension of social relationships. The objection may be raised that there is no empirical definition here; how can we quantify it? If we can't do this, and given the conceptual ambiguity, what good is it? In answering this question, we conclude with one final quotation from a contemporary historian who has captured what Marx meant by the historical dimension of social relationships.

"Sociologists who have stopped the time machine and, with a good deal of conceptual huffing and puffing, have gone

156 K. Marx, The Grundrisse, edited and translated by D. McLellan, (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p.77.

157 K. Marx, Theories of Surplus Value, Vol.1, Op.Cit., p.285.

down to the engine room to look, tell us that nowhere at all have they been able to locate and classify a class. They can only find a multitude of people with different occupations, incomes, status-hierarchies, and the rest. Of course, they are right since class is not this or that part of the machine, but the way the machine works once it is set in motion - not this and that interest but the friction of interests - the movement itself, the heat, the thundering noise. Class is a social and cultural formation (often finding institutional expression) which cannot be defined abstractly or in isolation, but only in terms of relationships with other classes; and ultimately, the definition can only be made in the medium of time - that is action and reaction, change and conflict. When we speak of a class we are thinking of a very loosely defined body of people who share the same congeries of interests, social experiences, traditions and value system, who have a disposition to behave as a class, to define themselves in their actions and in their consciousness in relation to other groups of people in class ways. But class itself is not a thing, it is a happening."¹⁵⁸

To a large extent, Marx's theory of social classes is in agreement with this statement although perhaps one additional point should be added. This "happening" can be understood by sociologists, economists, political scientists and others besides the historian and it can and should be made subject to empirical scrutiny. However, what Marx's analysis suggests is that if this is to be done, if class is to continue to be utilizable as a rigorous theoretical construct for depicting, classifying and understanding reality, then this can only be accomplished if social class is understood as a historical relationship involving the lives of real men and women which can only be conceptualized in terms of social relational categories that embody the capacity to explain the making and remaking of social structure and not its completion. In the final analysis, this is what Marx's theory of social classes is all about.

¹⁵⁸ E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class, Op.Cit., p.939.

Marx's Theory of Social Classes 1842 1875: A Synthesis

In this concluding chapter our purpose is to provide a brief schematic outline or overview of Marx's theory of social classes considered as a whole, as a totality. And for Marx the general theory of social classes begins with the following fundamental question:

"The first question to be answered is this: what constitutes a social class? - and the reply to this follows naturally from the reply to another question, namely: what makes wage-labourers, capitalists and landlords constitute the three great social classes?"¹

It was by beginning the theory of social classes from this fundamental question that Marx emphasized: "classes in turn are an empty phrase if I am not familiar with the elements on which they rest."² And for Marx an understanding of the elements or relations upon which the existence of classes is based, an understanding of what makes certain social classes the fundamental social classes of a given historical epoch, is in the first instance a theoretical question which must be rigorously articulated before the study of social classes can be made subject to empirical investigation.

Now in emphasizing that the investigation of social classes begins at the theoretical level of analysis, one must bear in mind the important question concerning levels of analysis and levels of abstraction. In emphasizing the importance of this question in Marx's work, Professor Dos Santos has pointed out that Marx:

"meant to treat the concept of class on several interdependent levels of analysis. This raises the question of the levels of abstraction on which the problem is to be studied ... In differentiating the levels of abstraction, Marx has as his objective the development of a theoretical study of certain definite conditions which do not exist in a pure form in empirical reality but the definition of which is a prerequisite

¹ K.Marx, Capital, Vol.3, Op.Cit., p.886.

² K.Marx, Grundrisse, Op.Cit., p.100.

to an explanation of that reality."³

It was precisely for this reason that Marx's theory of social classes began at the highest level of theoretical abstraction which concerns the specific character of the capitalist mode of production. And it was precisely for this reason that Marx emphasized that at the highest level of theoretical abstraction: "...we need present only the inner organization of the capitalist mode of production, in its ideal average as it were."⁴

Thus the theory of social classes begins at that level of analysis which Marx termed the theoretical level of "abstract specificity".⁵ That is, at the level of the capitalist mode of production, whose presence and dominance within historically conditioned social formations* supplies or "assigns rank and influence" to the ideological, political and economic levels, relations, or structures

³T.Dos Santos, "The Concept of Social Class", Op.Cit., p.173.

⁴K.Marx, Capital, Vol.3, Op.Cit., p.831.

⁵K.Marx, Grundrisse, Op.Cit., p.108.

*The relationship that Marx articulated between the concepts mode of production and social formation has been well summarized in another context by Nicos Poulantzas who has pointed out,

"In speaking of a mode of production, an abstract and formal object, one is still keeping to a general and abstract level, even though the concept mode of production itself already embraces relations of production, political relations and ideological relations: for example, the slave, feudal, capitalist modes of production, etc. These modes of production, however, only exist and reproduce themselves within social formations that are historically determinant: France, Germany, Britain, etc. at such and such a moment of the historical process. These social formations are always unique because they are concrete and singular real objects."

(N.Poulantzas, Classes in Contemporary Capitalism, Op.Cit., p.22.

of a social formation considered as a totality. It is at this theoretical level of "abstract specificity" where the articulation of the specific character and properties of the capitalist mode of production, its structures and its laws of tendential development, provides us with our first approximation (the first phase of a series of successive approximations) of the concept "class in itself".

In order to formulate the first theoretical specification of the concept class in itself, the inner organization of the C.M.P. must be theoretically articulated in such a manner so as to show how the direct producers are united with the means of production, and how this specific union enables surplus labour to be extracted from the direct producers. In order to accomplish this, Marx's analysis suggests that we must arrive at an initial approximation of the structural relationships that obtain between:

- 1) The relations of production of the labour process which concerns the manner in which labour power and means of production are enjoined within a complex working organism designated by the concept "collective labourer".
 - 2) The relations of production of the surplus value producing process (the property connection) which concerns the ownership and non-ownership of the means of production, and the relations of domination and subordination that obtain between those who perform the function of the collective labourer (general and subordinate) and those who perform the functions of capital, or the collective capitalist (primary and secondary).
 - 3) The relations between the combination of these two sets of relations of production that make up the production process, and the forces of production.
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For Marx, an understanding of these structural relationships must be placed within the context of conflict, not integration theory. As he pointed out in regard to the feudal mode of production:

"Thus feudal production, to be judged properly, must be considered as a mode of production founded on antagonism. It must be shown how wealth was produced within this antagonism, how the productive forces were developed at the same time as class antagonisms, and how one of the classes ... went on growing until the material conditions for its emancipation had attained full maturity." 6

Thus this first approximation of the theoretical level, which involves the "abstract specificity" of the "inner organization of the capitalist mode of production", must be construed in a manner that demonstrates in theoretical terms how the systemic contradictions between the forces and the relations of production provides the framework within which class contradictions develop.

Now in terms of theoretically developing the nature of the systemic contradictions and class contradictions that characterize the C.M.P., Marx's work suggests that theoretical analysis at the highest level of abstraction must be concerned with the C.M.P. in terms of its dual character, in terms of its being both a process of production and a process of reproduction.⁷ When considered as a

⁶ K. Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy, Op.Cit., p.122.

⁷ Although Marx suggested that the capitalist class, the working class and the class of landlords "constitute the three great social classes" of the C.M.P., he emphasized that at the highest level of theoretical analysis, it is the relations between capital and wage labour that forms "the dominant relation of production" of the C.M.P.. As he put it, "the relations between capital and wage labour determines the entire character of the mode of production". (K. Marx, Capital, Vol.3, Op.Cit., pp.879-880) Therefore at this particular level of analysis it is the capital-wage labour relationship that must be theoretically articulated, and the existence of other social classes must be depicted at the next level of analysis concerning historically conditioned social formations that are characterized by the presence of previous modes of production.

production process, the C.M.P. must be understood in terms of the production, distribution, exchange and consumption relations that obtain within social formations characterized by the presence and dominance of the C.M.P.. These relations must be understood in terms of the cyclical tendencies of capitalist production, the phenomena of overproduction and underconsumption, and in terms of the equalization and tendential fall of the rate of profit. It is here where theoretical analysis is concerned with the impact of a competitive market society on the concentration, accumulation and centralization of capital, and how these three processes effect the organic composition of capital. When considered as a reproduction process, the C.M.P. must be understood in terms of how the objective conditions and relations of the capitalist production process are reproduced, and how this reproduction process always takes place within objective limits. The parameters of these limits must be specified in order to arrive at a theoretical understanding of the barriers that must be constantly overcome if the conditions for the existence of the capitalist system are to be maintained and reproduced over time.

It was through such a specification that Marx was able to formulate the nature of the systemic contradictions of the C.M.P. and how these contradictions impose limits or barriers on the system's ability to reproduce those conditions necessary for its maintenance. And it was through such a specification that Marx was able to formulate the nature of class contradictions of the C.M.P. and how these contradictions impose limits or barriers on the ability of the capitalist class to retain control over the collective labour power of the working class through the reproduction of those conditions necessary for the maintenance of relations of domination and subordination.⁸

⁸The most definitive explication of the general meaning of the concept of contradiction was provided by Marx in the following terms: "The result[of this contradiction] is not simply a vicious circle of problems where the solution of one problem presupposes the solution of the other. But a whole complex of contradictory premises since the fulfilment of one condition depends directly upon the fulfilment of its opposite". (K.Marx, The Critique of Political Economy, Op.Cit., p.44)

For Marx, it is the analysis of the contradictions of the C.M.P., contradictions which follow from the very nature of its functioning, which provides us with our first approximation of the objective conditions within which the class struggle develops. And because the concept of social class is formed theoretically within the context of class struggle, within the objective framework of antagonistic social relations, the process of class formation must always be depicted in theoretical terms that link the process of class formation to the process of class struggle. Thus the functioning of the C.M.P. and the existence of its inherent systemic and class contradictions which form the objective conditions for the existence of class struggle, also provide us with the conceptual apparatus for theoretically articulating the concept of class in itself. It is at this stage that the concept of class in itself can be formulated in terms of the infrastructuralization and functional determination of class formation at the economic level.

The infrastructuralization process was utilized by Marx to show how the relations of production and the structures of positions within the capitalist production system had changed during the course of the historical development of the C.M.P.. It was here that Marx depicted in theoretical terms the transition from the earliest forms of manufacturing to the phase of modern industry, and how the occupational structure of capitalism changed as the impact of the increase in the organic composition of capital and the increase in the extent of capital concentration, centralization and accumulation resulted in the structural alteration of the organization of the relations of production of the labour process, and the organization of the relations of production of the surplus value producing process.

Marx's notion of the functional determination of class formation at the economic level was utilized to explain how the contradictions of the C.M.P. result in the emergence of specific functions that become attached to the structures of positions within the production process. This form of analysis seeks to explain in theoretical terms why the development of the C.M.P. results in the increase in the technical division of labour and the decomposition of aggregated human skills. This form of theoretical analysis seeks to explain the correlation between the separation of conception from execution and the emergence of the authority structure within individual capitalist firms where "the work of control" increasingly becomes "a function of capital", while the agents who form the collective labourer are increasingly subordinated to relations of dependency upon capital. It is this form of analysis that provides the first specification of the boundaries of the concept of class in itself. And it is from this analysis that a theoretical understanding of the "subsumption of individuals under definite classes" may be linked to those conditions which enable one class to have "control over other people's labour power".

However, the determinations that constitute the concept class in itself also involve political and ideological relations. Therefore it is necessary to theoretically develop and specify the nature of the relationships that obtain between the economic structure and the ideological/political superstructure. In order to accomplish this, Marx's analysis suggests that we must arrive at an initial approximation of the following:

- 1) the conception of totality which depicts in theoretical terms the general nature of the relationship between economic structure and the ideological-political superstructure. A theoretical specification

of this complex relationship must be given in terms of the reciprocal determination (i.e., determination and overdetermination) that takes place between the different levels of the totality, and how these structural relations of reciprocal determination differ in social formations marked by the presence and dominance of capitalist and pre-capitalist modes of production.⁹

⁹ A general summation of what this theoretical specification of the concept of totality involves in relation to capitalist and pre-capitalist modes of production has been provided by Perry Anderson in the following terms:

"All modes of production in class societies prior to capitalism extract surplus labour from the immediate producers by means of extra-economic coercion. Capitalism is the first mode of production in history in which the means whereby the surplus is pumped out of the direct producers is 'purely' economic in form - the wage contract, the equal exchange between free agents which reproduces hourly and daily inequality and oppression.

All other previous modes of exploitation operate through extra-economic sanctions - kin, customary, religious, legal, or political. It is therefore in principle always impossible to read them off from economic relations as such. The superstructure of kinship, religion, law or the state necessarily enter into the constitutive structure of the mode of production in pre-capitalist social formations. They intervene directly in the internal nexus of the surplus-extraction, where in capitalist social formations, the first in history to separate the economy as a formally self-contained order, they provide by contrast its external preconditions. In consequence, pre-capitalist modes of production cannot be defined except via their political, legal and ideological superstructures since these are what determine the type of extra-economic coercion that specifies them. The precise forms of juridical dependence, property and sovereignty that characterize a pre-capitalist social formation, far from being accessory or contingent epiphenomena, compose on the contrary the central indices of the determinant mode of production dominant within it."

(Perry Anderson, Lineages of the Absolutist State, Op.Cit., pp.403-4) For an interesting assessment of Marx's conception of totality as it pertains to both capitalist and pre-capitalist modes of production, see N.Poulantzas, Political Power and Social Classes, Op.Cit., pp. 25-33.

2) The role and nature of the capitalist state which must be depicted in terms of: (a) the structure of the state apparatus; (b) the functions of the capitalist state (economic, coercive, legitimation); (c) the manner in which class power is translated into state power (theory of state personnel, economic domination and structural constraint); (d) the relative autonomy of the capitalist state.

When the theoretical specification of the concept of totality and of the role and nature of the capitalist state has been made, then the analysis of social classes at the highest level of theoretical abstraction is complete. Such an analysis provides us with a theoretical understanding of how the "underlying effects" of the combined economic structure and ideological-political superstructure are condensed or concentrated within the institutional structure of a social formation, its relations of production, and the structures of positions within and outside of the production process amongst which the agents of production are distributed.

It is this analysis at the level of "abstract specificity" which provides us with a theoretical understanding of the structuration of class relations. The concept of class in itself summarizes the manner in which the ensemble of underlying effects are structured into conflict-generating relations of domination and subordination. The concept of class consciousness summarizes the manner in which the ensemble of underlying effects are structured so that individuals become the "bearers" or carriers of objective "class interests and class relations". At this level, classes are much more than "sacks of potatoes" or "empty places" whose occupants have the same objective class interests. Inscribed within the relations of production and the structures of positions within the

production process are latent relationships of class power. These are derived from the structuration of relations of domination and subordination that result in one class having the latent capacity to control other people's labour power, thus maximizing their capacity to realize their objective interests while at the same time minimizing this same latent capacity within other social classes. It is this analysis which provides the initial theoretical formulation of the "subsumption of individuals under definite classes".

Thus Marx's analysis suggests that the theory of social classes must initially be developed at the highest level of theoretical abstraction so that the scientific investigation of social classes in capitalist society can be undertaken in a manner that penetrates "the surface process, beneath which, in the depths, entirely different processes go on".¹⁰ Although this theoretical articulation of the relationship between the functioning of the C.M.P. and the existence of social classes is a necessary precondition for arriving at a general theory of social classes, it is not a sufficient condition for the development of such a theory. As Professor Dos Santos has pointed out,

"The different social classes that Marx discovered and the apparently distinct perspectives in which the class phenomenon is viewed do not signify a superimposition of the different foci or perspectives but a structured system of planes of abstraction ranging from the most concrete to the most abstract and from the most abstract to the most concrete. The closer we come to the concrete, the more general laws have to be redefined in ever more complex relations."¹¹

¹⁰ K. Marx, Grundrisse, edited by M. Nicolaus, Op.Cit., p. 247.

¹¹ T. Dos Santos, "The Concept of Social Class", Op.Cit., p. 180.

And for Marx the second level of abstraction, which brings us one step closer to the concrete immediacy of the existing reality, concerns the existence of social classes within specific historically conditioned social formations. It is at this level of analysis, where a blend of theoretical and empirical analysis takes place, and where the movement from the conception of class in itself to the conception of class as organized social forces, is initiated.

In order to begin theoretical and empirical analysis at this second level of abstraction, Marx's work suggests that initially the concept of a social formation must be articulated in terms of the existence and overlapping of several distinct modes of production. By tracing the impact of these modes on the class structure of various social formations, one can then arrive at a specification of the different patterns of class formation, how the various social classes are affected by the developmental tendencies of the C.M.P., and an initial approximation can be made of the relations of exploitation and dependency that exist amongst all the social classes of a given social formation. It is also at this level of abstraction that the relationships within classes can receive further specification by establishing the criteria by which the various fractions of a social class are constituted.¹²

¹²In terms of its application to contemporary developments, this would involve a specification of the manner in which different modes of production or various stages of a single mode of production combine within different historically conditioned social formations. For example, by viewing the historical evolution of capitalist industrial societies, the underdeveloped or emerging nations and the so-called state socialist industrial societies, one could depict how nations from each of these three groupings constituted a social formation characterized by the presence of one or more of the following: the competitive or monopoly stage of the capitalist mode of production, various remnants of the feudal mode of production, the initial forms of transitional modes of production, or various elements of what might be termed the more primitive forms of the subsistence modes of production. If one could establish the criteria

While such a form of analysis provides the outline of the economic structure of a social formation and the various patterns of class formation, Marx's work suggests that a more complete depiction of the character of a social formation must be arrived

for specifying the nature of the relationship between the forces and relations of production of these various modes or stages of a single mode of production, one could then erect a typology relating the various forms in which they combine and the various mixtures or patterns of class formation that characterize the various combinations.

In terms of establishing the criteria for depicting various fractions of social classes, there is much theoretical and empirical work to be done. In his own work, Marx utilized the various forms of capital to depict the fractions of the capitalist class (industrial, commercial, financial) and the differentials of income, status and skill to depict the fractions of the working class (aristocracy of labour, wage labourers). He also utilized a form of sectorial analysis where he divided the economy into two major sectors: department one which involves the production of the means of production of capital goods, and department two, involving the production of the articles of consumption or consumer goods. (K. Marx, Capital, Vol. 2, Op.Cit., pp. 395-402). By discussing the distribution of surplus value between these two sectors, the differences between them in terms of the ratios between capital and revenue, constant capital and variable capital, Marx was able to analyze and formulate several aspects of the structural relationships that obtain between the capitalist class and the working class of department one, and the capitalist class and the working class of department two.

In terms of contemporary analysis, theoreticians such as James O'Connor have utilized other forms of sectorial analysis involving the relations within the American working class in the state sector, the monopoly sector and the competitive sector, to show how differences in both the commodity markets and the labour markets (differentials in terms of capital or labour intensive industries, differentials in wage levels, differentials in collective bargaining power, etc.) are reflected in the relationships between the different class fractions defined according to the three-fold sectorial division. (J. O'Connor, The Fiscal Crisis of the State, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973), pp. 13-30.) In countries such as Sweden where the evolution of corporatism has precipitated the development of tripartism and national level collective bargaining practices, the various fractions of the capitalist class and the working class may be specified in terms of a sectorial analysis which focuses on the import (production for the protected domestic market) and export

at "by the analysis of the empirically given circumstances" which would include "natural environment, racial relations external historical influences, etc." Such an analysis must be utilized to show the various forms of conflict cleavages that exist and how they are related to relations within and between classes. Such an analysis would also be fruitful for depicting the various forms of cultural milieux within which consciousness of class is precipitated or inhibited and the extent to which these cultural formations are shaped by the dominant ideology.

However, the most important aspect of analysis at the level of a social formation concerns the relationship between classes as organized social forces and the various forms that the balance of class forces take. Marx's work suggests that such an analysis must focus on the following relationships:

- 1) the organization of classes into political parties, trade unions or employers' associations and various other groupings (interest groups, etc.).
- 2) the different alliances that take place within and between classes and their impact on the economic, political and ideological class struggles.

(production for the competitive international market) sectors of the economy. The manner in which different levels of productivity (3.0% per annum in the domestic market, 7.5% in the export sector) are translated into wage differentials, the taxation policies of the state to redistribute these increases, the hegemonic dominance of the export sector bourgeoisie within the Swedish Employers Association (S.A.F.) and their dominance on state planning boards (labour mobility programme, etc.) suggests the theoretical value of analyzing the class relations and class interests of the different fractions of the working class, the capitalist class and the new middle class as they are defined in terms of this import-export sector model.

3) the manner in which classes are aggregated and disaggregated at the level of class in itself (through proletarianization) and the degree to which these changes in the infrastructuralization and functional determination of social classes are reflected in the aggregation and disaggregation of classes as organized social forces (how the changes in the structure of class in itself are translated into changes in class organizations and class alliances).¹³

¹³ This relationship between the alterations in the structure of class in itself and the aggregation and disaggregation of classes as organized social forces (through organization, alliances and struggle) may well prove to be a fruitful area for the theoretical and empirical development of the theory of social classes. For example, one could focus on how changes in capital accumulation, centralization and concentration affected the structure of "the collective labourer". This could be done by devising a classification schema which would demonstrate the manner in which the various fractions of the collective labourer are aggregated and disaggregated at the level of class in itself. Such a classification schema could be formulated through the following forms of analysis:

- 1) Sectorial Analysis: division of the collective labourer into various fractions which correspond to the competitive, monopoly and state sectors of an economy. A subsequent division which would classify these three major groupings of the collective labourer into such categories as productive and non-productive, skilled and unskilled, manual and non-manual forms of labour.
- 2) Functional Analysis: the erecting of a classification schema which would clarify the different subordinate and general functions of the collective labourer and also suggest the various divisions within the collective labourer on the basis of separating those groupings who simultaneously perform the functions of capital as well as the general or subordinate functions of the collective labourer.
- 3) Structural Analysis: erecting a classification schema showing the various functions performed by the various fractions of the collective labourer in the different sectors of the economy and the patterns of change in the composition of these various fractions according changes in the infrastructuralization process, the separation of conception from execution and other forms of proletarianization.

However, in doing so, one must bear in mind an important point that Marxist theory insists on and which has been summarized by one writer in the following terms:

"If this disagreement [over the question of class boundaries] were just a question of esoteric academic debates over how best to pigeon hole different social positions, then it would matter little how these issues are eventually resolved. But classes are not merely analytic abstractions in Marxist theory; they are real social forces and they have real consequences. It matters a great deal for our understanding of class struggle and social

Such an analysis which depicts how these relationships (involving classes as organized social forces, and the corresponding balance of class forces) develop during the various phases that

change exactly how classes are conceptualized and which categories of social positions are placed in which classes. Above all, it matters for developing a viable socialist politics, how narrow or broad the working class is seen to be, and how its relationship to other classes is understood." (E.O.Wright, "Class Boundaries in Advanced Capitalist Societies", Op.Cit., pp.3-4) From this standpoint, and given that classes must be defined theoretically within the context of class struggle, one would have to relate these criteria for classifying the collective labourer to classes as organized social forces. For example, one would want to focus on the struggles between capital, labour and the state which concern such issues as technological change, occupational reclassification, strategies for economic development, and various other forms of struggle that involve directly or indirectly control over labour power. Such struggles could be investigated by examining the manner in which various fractions of the collective labourer are organized by blue or white collar trade unions, and how various fractions of the collective labourer are mobilized into working class based or non-working class based political parties and pressure groups. By focusing on the demands put forward by these organizations and the actions taken by them in response to the manner in which these demands were met with either compliance, compromise or noncompliance by the state or the capitalist class, one could then trace these demands back to the class situation of the various fractions of the collective labourer in order to assess:

- 1) the degree to which these demands and actions are supportive or non-supportive of those conditions necessary for the reproduction of capitalist relations of production.
- 2) the degree to which these demands and actions are initiated by the organizational elite of the various fractions of the collective labourer or by the membership groupings of the various fractions of the collective labourer.
- 3) the extent to which these demands and responses reflect increasing tendencies of cohesion or fragmentation within and between all the sections or fractions of the collective labourer.
- 4) the extent to which these demands and actions reflect the degree of class consciousness within the various fractions of the collective labourer.
- 5) the extent to which these demands and actions reflect the manifest or latent nature of the class struggle and how they are related to the cyclical tendencies of the C.M.P..
- 6) the extent to which these demands and actions affect the relative autonomy of the state and the translation of class power into state

reflect the cyclical development patterns of the C.M.P., and which summarize the extent to which the class struggle is latent or manifest in character, provide the conditions necessary for an analysis of the translation of class power into state power and the course of the political class struggle.

Marx's analysis suggests that this specification of the political dimension of class relations at the level of a social formation must include an empirical and theoretical analysis of the following relationships:

- 1) the various classes or fractions of classes which make up the ruling class and their relationship with their political representatives and ideological functionaries.
- 2) the extent to which one of these classes or fractions may exercise hegemony within the ruling class through direct or indirect control of one or several of the key institutions of the state apparatus.
- 3) the manner in which the boundaries of the ruling class contract or expand indicating the inclusion or exclusion of other class fractions and how these changes reflect the fragmentation or parcellization of hegemony amongst various fractions or the consolidation of hegemony to a greater or lesser extent within one or several class fractions.

power.

- 7) the extent to which these demands and actions precipitate greater cohesion or fragmentation within the capitalist class.
- 8) the extent to which these demands and actions alter the balance of class forces.

I need not emphasize the tentative nature of such a form of analysis which would require extensive research involving the establishment of theoretical classification schemas and an investigation into the various manners in which data could be compiled.

4) the extent to which the class struggle affects the relative autonomy of the state and how a functional imbalance may develop within the state apparatus precipitated by either a legitimation or accumulation crisis (or both) and the corresponding effect on class relations.

These various relationships that we have mentioned and which require rigorous theoretical and empirical analysis at both the level of "abstract specificity" and at the level of concrete historically conditioned social formations are not meant to be representative of all the relations whose specification is required for a general theory of social classes. Rather, they represent those fundamental relationships with which Marx's analysis was concerned and which provide not only the analytical criteria for the study of social classes, but also that important dimension with which Marx's theory was most concerned. That is to say, their specification allows us to conceptualize class as a historical relationship. For only after this has been done can we proceed to the final level of analysis that Marx's work suggests where the class phenomena is theoretically and empirically articulated during concrete conjunctures of relations or at the level of analysis which Professor Dos Santos has called "the social situation".¹⁴

The analysis of specific conjunctures of relations is the analysis of the historically unique social situation where the effects of the structuration of class relations and the contradictions of capitalist society may be analyzed in terms of the manner in

¹⁴ The importance of specific conjunctures has been summarized by Nicos Poulantzas who has suggested that the analysis of "the conjuncture allows us to decipher the historic individuality of the ensemble of a social formation, that is, it allows us to decipher the relation between the concrete individuality of the structures and the concrete configuration of the class struggle." (N. Poulantzas, Social Classes and Political Power, Op.Cit., pp.95-96). The first reference that Marx made to the importance of analyzing what he called "the conjuncture of relations" may be found in K. Marx and F. Engels, The German Ideology, Op.Cit., p.243.

which they are made manifest within the concrete immediacy of reality. At this level of analysis, a specification must be given of the unique combination of ideological, political and economic relationships, how these relationships assume an institutional form, and how human praxis absorbs the experience of these relationships through the "ideological forms" that always mediate the interaction of men and women with each other and with their environment.

Marx's work suggests that the analysis of conjunctures of relations must begin with a specification of the following:

- 1) the economic structure and how the forces and relations of production are developing within historically conditioned limits, the parameters of which must be specified.
- 2) the institutional structure of the ideological-political superstructure in terms of : (a) the manner in which the existing class struggle and the balance of class forces effects the relative autonomy of the state; (b) the manner in which the dominant ideology is incorporated in the institutional structure and how successfully it succeeds in integrating antagonistic class interests into more broadly defined general interests.

With this initial overview of the social situation, the class structure of society, which was initially articulated at the level of the social formation, may receive further specification in order to show how and why "the stratification of classes does not appear in its pure form".¹⁵ Such an analysis which seeks to articulate the effects of the structuration of class relations would include an investigation of the following factors:

¹⁵K. Marx, Capital, Volume 3, Op.Cit., p.885.

- 1) the stratification of individuals (along such dimensions as income, education, etc.) and the emergence of status differentials that become attached to particular class positions.
- 2) the extent of upward and downward mobility and how the various mobility mechanisms function as a conveyor belt distributing individuals from one set or subset of class relations to another.
- 3) how these patterns of stratification and social mobility are incorporated into the class psychology of various social classes or fractions of classes.
- 4) how these patterns of stratification and social mobility are incorporated into the class consciousness of various social classes or fractions of classes.¹⁵

¹⁵The reader will recall that earlier in this paper (pp.111-113) we established the various distinctions between Marx's broad and narrow usage of the concept of class consciousness and the concept of class psychology. In order to redefine these three conceptions and to link them to the various levels of analysis it is useful to focus on the following passage taken from Eugene Genovese's memorable depiction of the Southern planters' way of life within the pre-civil war slave society:

"The planters commanded Southern politics and set the tone of the social life. Theirs was an aristocratic, antibourgeois spirit with values and mores emphasizing family and status, a strong code of honour, and aspirations of luxury, ease and accomplishment. In the planters' community, paternalism provided the standard of human relationships and politics and statecraft were the duties and responsibilities of gentlemen. The gentlemen lived for politics, not, like the bourgeois politicians, off politics.

The planter typically recoiled at the notions that profit should be the goal of life and that the approach to production and exchange should be internally rational and uncomplicated by social values; that thrift and hard work should be the great virtues; and that the test of the wholesomeness of a community should be the vigor with which its citizens expand the economy. The planter was no less acquisitive than the bourgeois, but an acquisitive spirit is compatible with values antithetical to capitalism. The aristocratic spirit of the planters absorbed acquisitiveness and directed it into channels that were socially desirable to a slave society: the accumulation of slaves and land and the achievement of military and political honours."

(E.Genovese, The Political Economy of Slavery, (New York: Random

Although there is more that could be added to this depiction of the form of analysis that characterizes the investigation of specific conjunctures of relations, it is enough to conclude by saying that empirical/theoretical research at this level involves situating the historical specificity of the "present moment" within that broader historical context which involves the manner in

House, 1967), p.28).) This passage provides an overview of Marx's broadly defined conception of class consciousness in terms of the manner in which the class experience is absorbed into "traditions, value systems, ideas, and institutional forms" through human praxis. Genovese's depiction of the "aristocratic, antibourgeois spirit with values and mores emphasizing family and status, a strong code of honour, and aspirations to luxury, ease and accomplishment" is thus a reflection of the manner in which the class experience was handled in cultural terms by the planters thus becoming incorporated into the dominant ideology of southern society. Marx's more narrowly defined conception of class consciousness, which in this context refers to the planters' objective interests to maintain the existing relations of domination and subordination through "accumulation of slaves and land" is a specification which involves the planters' consciousness of their class membership, their opposition to the interests of other classes and their understanding of what is required in order to enforce those interests (ie., control of political and military life, etc.). And finally Marx's concept of class psychology refers to the manner in which the cultural experience of the planters becomes embedded within what might be called the emotional dimension of their human condition, that is, within the substructure of the cultural experience within "old memories, personal enmities, fears and hopes, prejudices and illusions, sympathies and antipathies, convictions, articles of faith and principles". (K.Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, Op.Cit., p.149). Each of these three conceptions make their appearance in Marx's work at different levels of analysis. The narrowly defined conception of class consciousness was utilized by Marx to specify those objective interests and objective relations which are inscribed within the structures of positions of the production process. It is this conception that Marx formulated at the highest level of theoretical abstraction and which forms a part of his concept class in itself and is symbolized by his depiction of individuals as the bearers or carriers of objective class interests and class relations. Marx's more broadly defined conception of class consciousness emerges at the level of a social formation, while the concept of class psychology is introduced at the level of conjunctures of relations. It is by viewing these three concepts

which social structure is made and remade. And the distinguishing feature of this level of analysis is that here the previous depiction of individuals as the bearers or carriers of objective class relations and class interests gives way to both an analytic and normative discourse concerning the intersection of the class experience and the human condition in that unique combination where social history and individual biography congeal in the lives of real men and women.

It is this schematic outline of these three different levels of analysis that constitutes what we would call an inverted thematic-synthetic summation of Marx's theory of social classes. As Marx himself emphasized, "my analytic method does not start from man but from the economically given social period". It was precisely for this reason that his theory of social classes begins at the level of "abstract specificity" involving an analysis of "the inner organization of the capitalist mode of production". However, Marx's analysis suggests that the theory of social classes can only be constituted by a series of successive approximations involving what Professor Dos Santos has termed "a structured system of planes of abstraction". And it was precisely for this reason that Marx's theory of social classes was constituted at the level of specific historically conditioned social formations as well as at that level involving concrete conjunctures of relations.

For Marx, class was a historical relationship, and therefore the theory of social classes had to be developed initially within a context concerning the nature of the historical evolution of the

within the logical order of Marx's exposition that one can appreciate Professor Dos Santos' depiction of Marx's theoretical project signifying not a conflation "of different foci or perspectives but a structured system of planes of abstraction ranging from the most concrete to the most abstract and from the most abstract to the most concrete."

capitalist mode of production. He also understood class as a relationship involving real men and women so that although the theory began with individuals being represented as "the personification of economic categories", the constant movement of his theory from the highest levels of abstraction to the concrete immediacy of existing reality, was able to situate the class experience within the lives of real people whose conscious existence his theory never lost sight of.

By arriving at such an understanding of the nature of class relationships, Marx was able to develop a conceptual apparatus that was constructed for the purpose of explaining social change and social conflict. And rightly or wrongly this theory of change and conflict was always related to both the nature of structural relationships and also to the developmental capacity of men and women. In this respect, despite all the conceptual ambiguity and unresolved problems, Marx's theory of social classes remains as both an outstanding contribution to the development of the social sciences as well as a remarkable insight into the nature of the human condition within capitalist society.

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